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NARRATIVE OF
SUCCESSIVE
BEREAVEMENTS

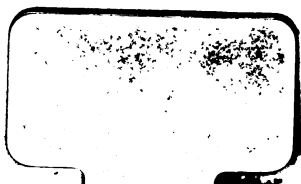
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SORROWING, YET REJOICING:
OR,
NARRATIVE
OF
RECENT SUCCESSIVE BEREAVEMENTS
IN A
MINISTER'S FAMILY.

“What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.”—ISAIAH xxxviii. 15.

EDINBURGH:
JOHN JOHNSTONE, HUNTER SQUARE;
WHITTAKER AND CO., AND NISBET AND CO., LONDON;
W. CURRY, JUN. AND CO., DUBLIN.

MDCCCXXXIX.



John Johnstone, Printer, Hunter Square.

PREFACE.

THE domestic affliction described in the following pages, excited the sympathy of many, even strangers to the sufferers, who at the time heard of it. Circumstances connected with this season of trial, in which God was pleased to show the riches and power of his grace, have suggested the publication of the Narrative. Friends, whose judgment was worthy to be trusted, were of opinion that the knowledge of those circumstances ought not to be confined to the narrow circle in which they occurred. And a hope, that a short account of them may prove useful, through the Divine blessing, has overcome the reluctance which must ever be felt to disclose to the public eye, either the privacy of the domestic hearth, or the secret feelings of the mind, on such an occasion.

Though it be seldom that such an accumulation of distress is inflicted on families, few are, at all times, exempted from sorrows similar in kind however they may differ in degree. Such seasons have been kept in view in preparing the Narrative. It may fall into the hands of those who are in trouble as we were, and may prove to them like the voice which Bunyan's Pilgrim heard before him in the valley of the shadow of death. It may speak encouragement and comfort to some such mourner, by testifying that he is not the only traveller in that dark region, and that no strange thing has happened to him in his affliction. Nay, it may produce a blessed hope that the cloud will pass; and a no less grateful assurance that, even whilst it continues, though dark and lowering to those who behold it from without, it is luminous, by the presence of the Lord, within.

In the sick-rooms of our dear children, whilst watching by them, I found several little books, which, in the days of health, pious friends had sent them,—records of those who, in childhood and early youth, had been called away from the

tender affection of earthly parents to dwell in their heavenly Father's house,—books which we had often perused together, and of which we had often conversed, but whose value I had never justly appreciated till now. Though unpretending in their appearance, I recognised in them friendly visitors for such a time as this. By them the good Shepherd spoke to us, saying,—“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten :” “Fear not :” “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.” If the following pages be blessed to accomplish the same end to other sufferers in the hour of domestic affliction, and be made effectual, in any measure, to “turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,” the object of the writer will be fully accomplished.

MANSE OF G——, INVERNESS-SHIRE.
December 1838.



SORROWING, YET REJOICING, &c.

CHAPTER I.

~~~~~  
" Jehovah hear thee in the day  
When trouble he doth send."  
~~~~~

ABOUT a year ago, only, our family consisted of *seven* dear children,—the oldest twelve, the youngest approaching two years of age—five being girls, and two boys. They were then in the enjoyment of perfect health. In the preceding winter they had had measles, but the complaint, on running its course, though preceded by influenza, seemed only to have strengthened their constitutions. No serious ailment had ever afflicted any of them, and no breach had ever been made in their number. Residing in a remote and secluded situation, at a distance from relations and friends, they knew no society but that of each other; and, happy in this, they had never desired to know more. Like "olive plants," they

SORROWING, YET REJOICING :

8
grew up around our table, and the goodness of
the Lord to us in them often filled our hearts.
At the above mentioned period, *hooping-cough*
appeared in our parish. Of a mild type, though
we avoided exposing the children to infection,
when it seized them we felt no alarm ; nor, such
being its character, did we regret that it had
taken them. A more favourable season could
have been desired, but, strong in hope, we anticipated the result which had followed measles,
and rejoiced in the prospect of our darlings sur-
passing both complaints, not in safety only, but
with comparative ease. These shoals passed,—
the most dangerous to bodily health which beset
the outset of life—we looked forward with confi-
dence to the voyage which lay beyond. We had
ever sought for them, from Him who had given
them existence, “first the kingdom of God and
his righteousness ;” but, knowing the value of
the promise, we had also often asked that their
“days might be long upon the land,”—and we
expected the blessing for his own name’s sake.
But perhaps we too much forgot that “God’s
thoughts are not our thoughts,” and that “by
visible things in righteousness,” he often, as
the God of salvation,” answers prayer.
The season, as all will remember, became ex-

tremely rigorous towards the close of the year, and continued so until the summer months. Nothing unusual appeared in the case of the children before the close of January ; but they then began to suffer from fever—always an attendant of hooping-cough. In the commencement, and during a great part of the progress of the disease, they had none ; when it appeared, as we knew it to be a natural symptom, no alarm was produced. For a considerable period the severity of the fever did not amount to what caused any alteration in their usual habits—they were still able to attend their governess, and to proceed with their studies. But towards the end of January and beginning of February, Matilda, our eldest, became so much oppressed, that she was withdrawn from the school-room ; and, as her mother had been in delicate health, she became her companion during her convalescence. After a little, however, the fever seemed to yield to the usual treatment, and her speedy recovery was expected with confidence. The other children also, soon after this, became worse, and were confined to the sick-room ; but they soon began to amend, and appeared rapidly recurring to their wonted health. The cough had nearly disappeared—its severity was quite gone

—and, with the anticipated fine weather of spring, we hoped that all should be well again.

Whoever has read Mr Bickersteth's "Domestic Portraiture" of Mr Richmond's family, must have been struck with the truth, as well as beauty, of the remarks occurring there on the difficulty of judging of the state of the religious feeling in young persons. Diffidence and backwardness to speak of their spiritual condition, natural to youth, and for the most part so becoming at that period, chiefly operate to produce this. Yet there is nothing more deeply exciting to the mind of a parent who knows the value of the soul, when dangerous sickness has seized the youthful group, than to be assured of the state of their hearts in the sight of God—as holy Mr Richmond's feelings, described in the work alluded to, testify. Death, in any circumstances, is in itself dreadful ; but when we know, or have good reason to hope, that the "second death" shall have no power over those who are about to be torn from us, the last enemy is stripped of all his terrors. Parents, therefore, may sometimes be relieved of much distress by remembering that children are not to be judged of as those who have come to maturer years. And that discoveries *may* be made of their spiritual

state, calculated to fill the hearts of parents with adoring gratitude, and their mouths with praise, our happy experience, which we desire to record for the direction and comfort of others, testifies. Though "slow to speak," children may be "swift to hear;" and, when living in a spiritual atmosphere, when the conversation listened to by them, the books read, and the example witnessed tend heavenward, like the unobtrusive plant which, unnoticed, imbibes nourishment from every genial breath, their youthful minds may be secretly extracting, from the various influences to which they are subjected, that "hidden wisdom" which, as it is by the Spirit, ultimately produces "fruit unto life eternal." Hence, it follows, that parents who endeavour to train their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,"—all whose exertions in the use of means are accompanied with persevering earnest prayer, are not entitled to conclude that He is not dealing savingly with their souls—that no effectual change is being wrought, because the spiritual conversation which they desiderate is awanting, or because they still see in their children, the gay vivacity which health and the society of each other naturally produce. Nor, when sickness comes, and the conversation then

turns on the solemn things of the soul and eternity, are they always to suppose that the feeling in them which prompts this exercise has had its origin in the altered circumstances in which they are then placed. Natural fear operating on an alarmed conscience may sometimes account for it; but affliction, too, may be the means of quickening the living seed which was previously sown in silence, and of forcing to rapid maturity those spiritual buddings which, hitherto, they knew not whether to consider *tares* or *wheat*; and to judge of this as in every case no more than the production of days of darkness contrasted with those of youthful joy, would argue but little knowledge of human nature, and would be applying to children a rule by which they ought not to be tried.

From the womb they may be sanctified, but the developement of the work of the Spirit, so that it may be seen of men, must await God's time; and it will ever be in perfect consistency with their circumstances and opportunities; though Christians, they will still be children. In the case of the *sickly* who, from this cause, are, in their earliest years, separated from those of their own age, and who, as they cannot engage in their childish sports, cease to have a relish for them,

and are thus thrown almost entirely into the society of the advanced in life,—when a work of grace really exists, the displays of its exercise will be powerfully affected by circumstances of such a nature. In cases of this kind, most remarkable testimonies have often been borne to the power of divine grace in children of almost infantile years, characterised by a depth of reflection, an extent of knowledge and a maturity of understanding, incredible to those who have not witnessed it. Facts corroborative of this remark are innumerable. But the good seed may be sown in childhood, and remain in the heart where no such external influences prevail to urge it to a precocious ripeness. The productiveness may then differ in degree, but it will accord in nature with the other. The wounded branch, ere it die, may put forth what appears an unnatural energy, and may bend to the earth with its load; but the scanty fruit and richer foliage of the healthy, will, no less certainly, indicate the character of the “root” from which they mutually derive their productiveness. A season of affliction, such as passed over us, may come, when the luxuriance of harvest, unlooked for so soon, however desired, may be made most rapidly to appear. But, should such a time be withheld,

years may pass, and the events of life appear to produce their usual effects ; “ the clods of the valley ” may seem to triumph, and the labours of a pious upbringing to fail ; until at last “ the time to favour ” arrives, and the power that is not “ of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man ” is exerted, “ until the Spirit is poured from on high ; ”—then “ the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted for a forest,” and the ransomed of the Lord are seen to be at once a *chosen generation* and a *peculiar people*. In proof of which remark, witness, once more, the history of Mr Richmond’s family.

Reflections such as these were often strongly suggested amidst the health and happiness which our youthful group so long enjoyed ; and they constituted the source of much consolation when troublous times at last overtook them. With prayerful expectation we often looked forward to the period when their light should “ break forth as the morning,” when personal godliness, with usefulness in their day and generation, should testify to the reality of that spiritual life, indications of the existence of which, we sometimes hoped, we already discovered. But God had provided some better thing for us ; for times and seasons are in his power.

The education which we had endeavoured to give our children might be truly said to be Scriptural. Whilst secular learning was prosecuted with much success, every exertion was made, in and out of the school-room, to store their minds with the Word of God. The great truth was ever kept before them, "that the wisdom which cometh from above,"—the saving knowledge of God, is alone truly important,—that this is the one thing needful, whilst all the rest might be dispensed with. Catechetical instruction was confined to the *Mother's* and *Assembly's Catechisms*; and, with these, hymns, tracts, and religious narratives, suited to their capacity, were largely furnished them, and eagerly perused. And, though last in this enumeration, certainly not least in importance, was the proving of Scripture truths from the inspired Word. Under this discipline, we were frequently amazed at the clear comprehension of Christian doctrine, in all its bearings, manifested by them. We knew, indeed, but too truly, that mere human acquirement may be mistaken for spiritual life,—the illumination of the understanding for a change of heart; but we also knew that God can dwell in the soul of a child, that he can quicken, as well as give light; and, conscious as we were of imperfection

and shortcoming in all that we did, our secret thoughts at times suggested, that "flesh and blood" had not revealed to them what they knew.

On one occasion, when the exercises of the evening of the Sabbath were past, and the other children had retired, Matilda being alone with her mother, she said to her,—“How concerned am I, Matilda, that you should *feel*, as well as know the truth.” After some hesitation, and as if ashamed to confess it, she answered,—“Mamma, I do feel, and I have been nights that I have not slept under anxiety about my soul.” In her illness, we ascertained that she had been much awakened during the prevalence of cholera in the country, though the pestilence had never visited our neighbourhood, and that then, though little more than six years of age, she had often retired for secret prayer on other occasions besides her stated seasons. Sermons heard had also sometimes aroused her. She spoke of one particularly from Psalms xxv. 11, preached by Mr M'Donald, Urquhart, on the occasion of the baptism of a little sister, and repeated its divisions and particulars. All these things, we are now fully persuaded, were the gracious strivings of that mighty, though unseen power, which, unperceived in its

operations, can reveal to babes the hidden mysteries of true godliness, when they are concealed from the wise and prudent.

Though saving impressions may be borne down, they are not of necessity uprooted, by the hilarity and playfulness of healthy childhood. The impetuosity of the current may bend, so as to cover and conceal the plants of heavenly growth which have sprung in the heart; but when occasions arrive which cause this current to subside, they raise their heads again, where they exist, with undiminished vigour. Dispensations which bring eternity near to the youthful mind, constitute such occasions: for then the word of truth bears most powerfully upon the conscience. A season of this kind was granted our family when measles entered it,—a year previous to the visitation of hooping-cough. Neither did the children nor we at any time apprehend a fatal termination; but so much of serious and solemn feeling was produced in all, the usual flow of animal spirits was so subdued, as to afford, in our apprehension, a favourable opportunity to test the tenderness of their hearts with reference to divine things. How great, then, was our delight to see them—especially the older ones,—eagerly turn, of their own accord, to the one blessed subject, and desire only the Word

of God, with such books as exhibited its truths, to be read to them ! How cheerfully were their oft-repeated requests to be gratified in this way complied with ! And how blessed the reflection then, but especially now, that in such occupation they sought and found their happiness,—their parents never appearing so beloved by them as when conversing on, and recommending the things which belonged to their everlasting peace ! I shall never forget my sensation of sanctified pleasure on the occasion of their recovery from their ailment, when I invited them into my study, that we might together acknowledge the good providence of God, and give him thanks that they had all been brought in safety through a dangerous disease,—their alacrity to engage in the duty,—their solemnity when engaged, and their deep feeling when it ended. Alas ! little did I then think, that in one short twelvemonth I should be weeping over the grave of those who then were most affected ! But how different should be my tears, had I not such recollections to dwell on, and could I not recall those occasional gleams of heavenly sunshine, which formed the precursors of that glorious illumination which it pleased the Lord to shed upon their latter end !

Let not parents who desire to be faithful, think

lightly of the slightest intimations of feeling in their tender offspring. The folly bound up in their hearts may shade the work of the Lord, without extinguishing it. Let them watch and pray over "the good thing" which He may have found there ; in due time they may reap, if they faint not.

Matters continued with our poor invalids much as I have already described them, until about the middle of the month of March. I had engaged to assist at the Communion in Glasgow, which was to be celebrated in the beginning of April, and it now approached the time at which it should be necessary for me to leave home. The medical attendant had recommended change of air for them all, and especially for Matilda, who had by this time so far recovered as to make it advisable that she should accompany me. A beloved aunt of hers, who had passed the winter with us, and whose conversations on religious topics, Matilda told us afterwards, she believed had been blessed to her, was about to be married to another valued relative, and our dear child was asked to form one of the party on the occasion. As I was to perform the ceremony on my way to Glasgow, it was arranged that she should accompany me so far, and await my re-

turn. The little preparations required for the occasion in view, accordingly, claimed some attention for the present ; but although Matilda seemed pleased with the prospect of being my travelling companion, and of the happy meeting of friends to which we looked forward, she exhibited none of that eagerness or impatience which might have been expected in one of her age. When we recollected her lively expression of warmth of heart on ordinary occasions, her present composure could not but affect us. Alas ! had the veil been lifted off futurity but for a short moment, what a season of sorrow should we have beheld at the very threshold, — contrasting so strongly with present anticipations !

To prepare Matilda for the journey which we contemplated, it was thought proper to accustom her to the open air. She was, therefore, on two or three occasions, taken out when the weather permitted, and her general health seemed to benefit by the exercise. As the time drew nigh for our departure, we ceased to fear any interruption of our project ; and as we were assured that change of scene was all, under Providence, that was required for her perfect recovery, our hopes were high that her usual health would soon be restored. But, a few days before the time fixed

for setting out, she caught a fresh cold, by what means we could never ascertain, and a return of the fever ensued. At first, we hoped that the attack, which appeared by no means formidable, would speedily pass; but the fever lingered beyond all our calculations, and it soon became evident that poor Matilda could not, with safety, be exposed to the fatigue and risks of the proposed journey, and that, for a little longer, she must be confined to her room.

In ordinary circumstances, such a disappointment was calculated to be severely felt by a child of *twelve*. The mild composure which she exhibited under it, accordingly, deeply interested and delighted our hearts, while it excited all our sympathy. No murmur was heard, no regret expressed; and though at that time she had not revealed to us the state of her mind, nor had we discovered the holy principle by which she was animated, we now know that her patience was the fruit of that saving grace which renews the will, and brings it into conformity to the perfect will of God.

This relapse distressed us much in the circumstances in which it occurred; but we felt no alarm for her safety. The solemn duty on which I was called from home could alone reconcile us to the

temporary absence which it demanded ; and the few days of separation from my family which were required, appeared a trial which no former separation ever had. But as I had the private opinion of the medical attendant, giving assurance that nothing serious appeared in Matilda's case, and that every symptom indicated a speedy recovery, a sense of duty overcame my feelings of affection ; and, urged both by our dear child and her mother, I left home, in the expectation that, at furthest, in a fortnight, I should rejoin them all in happier circumstances. Alas ! how little do we know what so short a period may bring forth ; and how slow of heart are we to believe that we cannot boast of to-morrow !

“ Oh ! what is life ! 'Tis like the bow
That glistens in the sky :
We love to see its colours glow—
But while we look they die.
Life falls as soon : to-day 'tis here—
To-morrow it may disappear.”

CHAPTER II.

~~~~~  
" O grave ! where is thy triumph now !  
And where, O death ! thy sting ?"  
~~~~~

It was a day or two after I had left home, that Matilda disclosed, for the first time, the whole state of her feelings. Occasional expressions had fallen from her to myself before, which, with her intelligence, and the general tenor of her conduct, had produced in my mind the happiest anticipations ; but the unreserved avowal of her experience had not been made till now.

Her mother had concluded their usual exercise of reading the Scriptures, and had sat down beside her. Matilda began by saying, that she had for some time back been anxious to open her mind to her, but that she could never find resolution to do it. This she deeply regretted ; and particularly, that she had not spoken to me before I left home. She stated, that she had now

made up her mind not to defer it, as she considered it sinful to have concealed the state of her feelings from her parents so long. She then lamented, in bitter terms, her being a sinner, and that she could not keep from sinning.

“ When I think,” she exclaimed, “ that God cannot look upon sin but with horror, is it not dreadful that I cannot keep from sinning ; and when I think of God’s love towards me, in not sparing his own Son, it grieves me sorely, and wounds my feelings that I can so sin.—Doesn’t it hurt your feelings, mamma ? ”

“ It ought certainly to do so,” was her mother’s reply, “ but I am afraid it does not enough.”

She then said, “ We are poor, weak, sinful creatures, but Christ will do all for us.”

Her mother remarked, that it was through Christ alone the pardon of sin could be obtained ; to which she replied, “ O yes : and I am constantly praying that my sins may be washed away in the fountain of His blood. I have often had convictions before, but they were not permanent, —now, I cannot avoid having before my eyes, day and night, what a sinner I am. I am so ignorant I require a great deal of teaching ; and I hope you will every day be speaking to me on these subjects. I will be praying that the Spirit

may bless your instructions. I hope you will be praying for me, too ; and I am sure my dear papa prays for me where he is."

The conversation was here interrupted by some one coming into the room. Though reserve, as to the secret of her heart, was abandoned in regard to her mother, it still appeared too sacred to be revealed to others ; and in such a matter she shrunk sensitively from display.

Her humiliation, under a sense of sin, truly bespoke the presence of that influence for which she in secret prayed,—the power which alone can produce "godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation." In her view, God's law "was exceeding broad ;" its spirituality and extent such as to cause her to record, against herself, a sentence of condemnation as the chief of sinners. Yet her sense of mercy in Christ at least equalled her humiliation. She beheld him as God's unspeakable gift to sinners, loving her,—able and willing to save. Thus she enjoyed the privilege of the adoption of the children of God.

On the succeeding day, her mother and she had engaged in reading, as usual, when she again spoke with great feeling of the evil of sin ; and deplored her condition in the sight of God.

"How *harrowing* to my feelings," she ex-

claimed,—the large tears rolling over her face, “that I cannot keep from sinning! When the Lord is pleased to restore me to health, I trust I shall live differently from what I have done hitherto. And when papa comes home I am resolved to conceal none of my feelings from him. I know my great ignorance, and how much I require to be taught. He and you will be teaching me,—and we shall be so happy together, speaking of spiritual things; for although I know a good deal of the Scriptures, I do not understand them as I ought.”

Thus did she breathe the aspirations of her soul after increased knowledge of God, holiness, and spiritual enjoyments. Her mother spoke to her of the freeness of the Gospel, and of its glory,—Christ being willing to receive the chief of sinners, when she listened with most marked delight; and seemed to derive comfort, in the highest sense, from looking to Jesus as a crucified and exalted Saviour.

“Have you any doubt, my dear,” her mother asked, “of Christ’s willingness to receive you?”

“O no, mamma!” was the immediate reply; “think of his own beautiful words, ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;’ and again, ‘Ho, every one

that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price.’”

These passages were quoted by her with such emphasis, and her whole manner and expression so struck her mother, that, for the first time, an idea took possession of her mind that probably the Lord was preparing her for an early removal from the world, and that in her youth she might be called away. This solemn reflection produced a pause in the conversation. After a little, her mother said to her, with caution, that she might not be startled, “Matilda, do you think yourself dying?”

“No,” was the reply; and, with a somewhat alarmed look, she asked, “Do you think me dying, mamma?” She immediately continued, without waiting for the answer,—“but nobody can say how any sickness may end.”

One of the symptoms of her complaint was extreme deafness, which proved a distressing hindrance to free conversation. It often, however, afforded opportunities of discovering her secret experience; for, during the night especially, and at other times also, when, from this cause, unconscious of the presence of any human witness, her prayers were uttered aloud, and expressed the

most humble dependence on sovereign mercy, with earnest longings for the graces of the Spirit, and meetness for heaven. The correctness of expression, as well as depth of feeling, struck every one, as indicating an understanding wonderfully matured, through grace, as well as a heart savingly changed. Supplications, uttered in terms like the following, were often listened to by those who watched by her :—

“ O Lord, I am unworthy, but I believe that for the sake of Christ thou wilt hear and answer me. O wash me in the fountain of his blood. Give me a new heart, to love and serve thee. I would give myself up to thee, spirit, soul, and body ; and I beseech thee, O Lord, to let me rest satisfied with nothing short of thyself. Sanctify unto me this sickness, and give me patience to bear it. Bless my parents, my brothers and sisters, with all that are dear to me in the whole world. O give me thy blessing, and accept me, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

On the occasion of the conversation related above, she complained of her deafness ; and stated her distress, that she could not hear distinctly what was spoken to her. Her mother reminded her that God could make up for that disadvantage a hundred-fold ; and that the teaching of

his Spirit was infinitely better than that of all men. She seemed quite comforted, and said, "I will pray, then, to be kept from impatience under my trial."

On the Sabbath, when her mother came to read to her, and had finished the usual exercise from the Scriptures, she asked whether she should then go on to read some of the small books which they were so fond of hearing. Her answer was, "O no; those books are very good, but the Bible is the only book for me now."

On being asked what part of the Scriptures she preferred, the answer was, "What I may understand."

The eleventh chapter of the Gospel by John was selected; and she listened with close attention and deep interest. When her mother came to the words, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live,"—"Stop," she cried, "there is the truth, 'he that *believeth*, though he were *dead* yet shall he live;'" uttering the words "believeth," and "dead," with all the emphasis she could employ.

Her mother called her attention to Martha's blessed state, when Jesus asked her if she believed this, and she was able to reply, "Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ." "O

yes," she answered ; and seemed lost for a little in deep thought, responding to her mother's observation, " No one could say that unless taught of God."

She then spoke of the Psalms, and remarked, that they were her favourite portion of the Scriptures ; as in reading them she always felt, that, whatever her circumstances, there she found something to suit her. After some observations of this kind, she requested the ciii., the li., the lxxxiv., and the lxii., to be read to her.

On this day her mother first became alarmed, and thought her in danger. The medical attendant was still of his original opinion, and expected that she was now at the crisis of what did not at any time appear a formidable relapse of fever from cold. He had, on this morning, administered some strong medicines ; and as the exertion of hearing, when she was addressed, exhausted her much, it was necessary to leave her undisturbed as much as possible.

On Monday, she spoke often of the vanity of the world, and seemed deeply impressed with the folly of seeking or expecting any thing satisfactory in it. The Lord was loosening all her affections from things seen and temporal, and preparing her to leave them without a sigh. He was teaching

her to judge them by the rule of those who, in every age, have confessed, because they were made to feel, themselves pilgrims and strangers; and who, crucified to the world, have desired "a better country, that is an heavenly."

She spoke much also, on this day, of her own sinfulness, and of the mercy of God in Christ. After enlarging for some time on this topic, she exclaimed, "Well might David say, 'Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious; long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.'" Psal. lxxxvi.

From the commencement of hooping-cough, there had been, in Matilda's case, the peculiarity of great difficulty in recovering breath after the fit. As the cough became milder in its character, and when it began to disappear, she was occasionally much distressed with what we took to be asthmatic spasms. Previous to the relapse, they had, in a measure, ceased; but in the beginning of this week they returned again, and became more frequent, as well as more painful.

On Tuesday, she expressed a desire to be removed from the bed on which she was lying, to a small couch, which could be moved at pleasure, and from which she could look out upon the fields, where the operations of spring were going

busily forward. While there, she seemed full of gratitude for her comforts and mercies, and spoke much and often of the love of God in bestowing them so abundantly on *her*, "such a sinner, and so unworthy." On one of these occasions, she cried, "Is it not dreadful, mamma, that I have lived in this world for twelve years in sin?—but I hope the Lord will enable me, if I am spared, and when I get better, to live differently in time to come."

She then asked her mother's pocket Bible, as her own was that used in the school-room and too large to put under her pillow, that she might be perusing it when her strength permitted, and when no one was at hand to read to her. She took it, accordingly, and placed it under her pillow with much apparent satisfaction.

"Mamma," she asked, "what would a new pocket Bible cost?" "About five or six shillings," she was told. "Then, I have a little money now, and I shall keep all I get till I make up the price." She was reminded that she already had a nice pocket Testament, given her lately by a kind uncle; to which she replied, "O yes, but there are so many things in the *Old Testament*, too, which I like to be reading, that I am anxious for the other."

In course of this day she was left alone in the room for a little with the other children. She called them about her, when, taking up some small delicacies which had been provided for herself, and were lying near her, she shared them, saying "take these among you—I have not much to give away; but I can speak to you of God." She then addressed them seriously on spiritual things, until interrupted by some one entering the apartment. How little did she or they think that, ere another sun should sink below the distant mountain which bounded their prospect from the place where they were thus engaged, the tongue which addressed them should be silent in death, and the spirit whose longings it suppressed, be returned to the bosom of its Father!

Next day was Wednesday, the 11th April. Her mother rose early, about six o'clock, to relieve the servant, who had watched during the night. When she entered the sick-room, Matilda turned towards her with great animation, and the happiest expression of countenance.

"Come away, my dear mamma," she exclaimed, "I have slept well, and feel quite refreshed—I am a great deal better. We shall have such a happy day—my hearing is greatly

improved, and we shall be all the morning alone. I have just been giving myself up, spirit, soul, and body, to Jesus, and I have been repeating my Psalms and chapters ; but I am so glad to see you that you may speak to me, and that I may ask what I want to know."

Her mother's heart rejoiced ; for, from her appearance, she then, and both she and the doctor, for a great part of the day, were encouraged in the opinion that the crisis was past, and that her recovery, though it should be tedious, might now, under Providence, be hopefully looked for.

When they were set down together, the conversation turned on the union of Christ with his people—its indissoluble nature under all circumstances. Her soul seemed to repose on the doctrine with a peace not to be understood but by those who experience it. The following passage, from the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, as bearing on the subject, was then read : " Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor

things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The precious truth seemed as "hidden manna" to her, and she expressed herself comforted and refreshed. How nourishing to the hungry soul is God's word, when he has opened the heart to receive it in faith; the soul that is in Christ, "sealed with that holy spirit of promise which is the earnest of its inheritance!"

A pause took place in the conversation, and after a little she appeared dull and cast down. When her mother inquired the reason, she said, "I find all my desires to be conformed to the will of God in vain—I cannot do or be what I wish, or keep from doing what I hate."

She was still within the reach of "sin's suggestions and Satan's temptations." Her spirit, which aimed at perfect holiness, and desired to soar above the polluted atmosphere of a world lying in the wicked one, felt and mourned the load which seemed to render its every effort fruitless. Where, in such circumstances, could it look for direction, but to that "light shining in a dark place," which reveals the experience of all who are taught of God, and tells of such trials in

their case, even in the near approach to heaven ? Her mother read to her from the close of the 7th chapter of the Romans : “ For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing : for to will is present with me ; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not : but the evil which I would not that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God ; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

“ That,” she cried, “ is exactly as I feel, mamma ;” repeating, once and again, with evident comfort, the apostle’s declaration,—“ I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

She was now required to lie still for a time, as some medicine had been administered. When

the conversation was resumed, it turned on the temptations to which we are exposed from Satan and our own evil hearts.

On this she remarked,—“ Well, mamma, to tell you the truth, Satan tried me very sorely one day of late.”

Her mother immediately asked in what she had been tempted by him.

“ He tried to make me think that it is too soon for me to give myself up to Christ,—that I am too young—that there is plenty of time for that hereafter ; and he succeeded, for one day, to keep me from prayer ; but he has not come near me since.”

The doctor had enjoined quiet and silence ; her mother reminded her of this. “ O, very well, mamma,” she said ; “ but if you knew the good it does to both my body and soul, when we get talking alone on these subjects !” Her favourite psalms were read to her, and she lay in silence for about two hours.

When breakfast was sent up, on being raised in the bed that she might take it, a sudden spasm almost deprived her of breath. It produced a startling scream ; but she instantly recovered, expressing a hope that her mother was not alarmed, adding, that she had herself been afraid for a

moment, but now felt quite well again. After a little, she expressed a desire to be removed to the couch on which she had lain the preceding day ; and when she had partaken of something to strengthen her for the exertion, her request was complied with.

When placed comfortably, as she had wished, she exclaimed,—“ O what mercies are granted such an unworthy creature as I am, were there nothing more than the kind parents God has bestowed on me ! ” Thus she lay for considerably above an hour, until her mother, conceiving that she would be more at ease in the bed, proposed replacing her there. She immediately assented, saying,—“ I prefer this ; but if you wish me to remove, I am quite willing.” She was accordingly placed in bed.

No sooner was this accomplished, than the spasms and breathlessness recurred to a degree much greater than they had previously been experienced. The alarm for her state, which had subsided in her mother's mind, was, on witnessing this, painfully renewed. The medical attendant, too, who had resolved on leaving her in course of the forenoon, thought it advisable to alter this resolution. The state of the weather, in the early part of the day, had prevented his

departure, and thus was he, in Providence, detained for the occasion when his kind services were most required.

About two o'clock, she, for the first time, suddenly complained of pain in the heart,—various means to remove which were employed in vain. A slight alleviation of the suffering was effected, but nothing more, and thus matters continued for some time.

Her mother now looked for her death, although she did not yet think it near. A day or two before, she feared that the complaint would fall upon the lungs, and that the dear sufferer, after a lingering illness, would become a victim of consumption. She now trembled that her frame might sink more speedily before the power of the exhausting ailment under which she laboured. It was evident that she herself had, as yet, no apprehension that her life was in danger.

The dear child had, in course of the forenoon, been counting the days until my return. “One—two—three—till Saturday,” she said, “and then papa—my dear papa, who used to feed me,—will be come!—O how happy I shall be!” But it was not the will of our heavenly Father that we should ever meet again in this world; and, O! how little had this entered into our cal-

culations when we parted, so short a time before !

Under impressions of the change which now appeared in Matilda's condition, her mother was seized with great anxiety. She conceived it to be her duty to warn her of her true circumstances, but from this the medical attendant strongly dissuaded her in the meantime. She inquired earnestly whether he thought she could survive my return ; but it was impossible to give any decided opinion. How trying that hour of agony no language can describe !

The tender patient's suffering, in the meantime, became very great ; the sight of which so distressed her mother, that, to conceal her emotion, she was compelled to quit the room. Matilda, on observing this, sent the doctor to inquire for her ; expressing her fear, that, in her delicate state, she should do herself injury by giving way to sorrow. It so evidently increased the dear child's suffering, to witness her mother's distress, that, by a strong effort, she suppressed the outward appearance of it, and returned to the room. When she came in, Matilda's face was turned away from the front of the bed, so that, ere she perceived her, she had come up close to where she lay, and said that she had now come back.

“O mamma, I am so glad of that,” was the reply. “I am surprised to see you so much distressed—if it were grandmamma; but I am now much better, although I have still a little of this breathlessness; but,” she added, “don’t you be anxious, sit where you are, for I like to feel your very body touching me.”

“O my darling Matilda, give yourself up to Christ.”

“Yes,” she said, “my dear mamma. I am so oppressed just now—but when I get relief.”

In a little she became easier. A few drops of laudanum were administered; but it had scarcely any effect in alleviating the acute pain with which she was hopelessly struggling.

All now retired to take dinner, excepting her mother, who was left alone with her. She requested to be turned with her face to the front of the bed. To aid in effecting this, her mother directed her to put her arms around her neck, by which means she might raise herself easily; but this she declined, as causing unnecessary trouble, and said that she could turn without any help; which she accordingly did.

So soon as a view of her face was obtained, her mother saw that death was very near; the melancholy fact was too truly inscribed on every

feature. Just as the doctor, who had been immediately recalled, entered the room, she was seized with a dreadful spasm, accompanied with most acute pain at heart. With an imploring look she asked for something to relieve her, and offered to take any medicine, however bitter. The only reply was the melancholy communication, made with tears, that nothing could relieve her.

Her mother then declared, aside, to the medical attendant, that she could no longer defer telling her child that her dissolution was near. He had formerly dissuaded from this course, with the humane intention of sparing his patient's feelings ; but the time now was evidently short, and he gave his ready assent.

"My darling Matilda," her mother then said aloud to her, "Jesus is coming to take you to himself—the hand of death is on you !"

For a moment she seemed startled and alarmed, but speedily recovered her composure.

"Does the doctor think me dying?" she asked.

"Yes, he does," was the heart-rending reply.

"How long do you think, doctor, I can live?"

"I cannot say how long, my dear,—the God who gave you life alone knows."

On this she turned to her mother, and with a

look of earnestness and solemnity, the most striking, which awed, and went to the hearts of all present, she said,—

“Mamma, I have concealed nothing from you—you know the whole state of my mind and all about me,—do you think that I am resting on Christ?”

“Yes, my dear,” was the answer, “I do believe that you are. You know that you have often told me that you felt and were assured there is no other salvation but to be washed in His blood.”

“O yes, I have,” she said; and, lifting up her hands with great solemnity, added, “well, then, I am not afraid to die; I love Jesus, and I know that he loves me!”

Another spasm ensued, and she was in great anguish. The other children had been introduced at her request, that she might see them, but they were withdrawn, as the room became overheated. Her mother's grief, which she laboured to conceal, compelled her to retire for a few minutes. When she again appeared, the sweet child said,—“Come near me, my dear mamma, till I tell you how much I love Jesus. Yes,” she said in an under tone, when her mother sat down beside her, “*yes, I love Him!*”

When she had recovered breath partially, she said, " I should like to see the rest—perhaps I could say something to them."

The children were accordingly brought in. When they were all arranged near her, she said to them, with a tone and manner full of affection and pathos, " Children, I am going to die, and I am *not afraid* to die ; for I know that Jesus loves me, and I love him. O, see that you be good children, and love him too."

The terrors of death had often been the subject of conversation with them, in days of health, when he was contemplated at a great distance, and the power of Christ to take away his sting, so that believers should be kept in safety in the last struggle, they had also often heard of ; and in the testimony which she now bore to the faithfulness of the Saviour, and her freedom from fear through his grace, she had reference to all that they had once heard upon the subject, and thus she desired to " set to her seal that God is true."

The doctor after this expressed a desire that the children should be removed. As they were retiring from the room, she called back the youngest of her sisters, who had been present, and, as if she feared her first address had not been comprehended, she repeated it, saying,—

“ Maggy, I am going to die—and they will put me in a big black hole—but I am not afraid, for I love Jesus, and see you that you will love him too. Remember your catechism.” She had not yet learned to read the Scriptures.

She then said to them all, as they lingered about the door and wept, “ Don’t cry for me,—farewell.”

The servants on this came into the room, when she addressed them much in the same strain, informing them that she was dying; that she had no fear; and that her confidence arose from depending upon Christ alone. One of them who, she knew, did not understand English, she addressed in Gaelic, solemnly warning and entreating her and all of them to go to Christ.

When they had quitted the room, her mother asked, “ What shall I say to your dear papa from you when he comes home ? ”

After a short pause, during which she was much affected, she replied with great tenderness of manner, “ You will tell him that I think I am united to Christ; that I love Jesus, and know he loves me.”

“ Will I give him your love ? ” “ O yes,” was the reply. She then said, “ Mamma, I am not sorry to leave the world, but I am sorry to leave

you all ;” on uttering which, her heart seemed bursting. The last, the only tie, which bound her to earth was in being broken. The enemy could not destroy her, but this one opportunity more was left to inflict a passing wound ere she entered into endless joy. The wound was given, but it was as quickly cured. Her “Friend” was at hand, and peace could not be distant.

“ You remember, my dear,” her mother said, “ the chapter I read you lately, about Christ’s second coming, and how we shall all meet then ? ”

She was instantly comforted, and her countenance brightened,—“ O yes,” she answered, “ we shall all meet again.”

A dreadful spasm immediately ensued. “ Oh ! ” she cried, after a short interval, “ I am in great pain—how I desire that He would come and take me to himself ! ”

After a few moments’ silence she made a sign with her finger, saying “ Doctor ! ” as if wishing to speak to him. On his approaching she could only add “ *speech—less ;* ” and without a single throe breathed her last ; her redeemed soul quitting its frail tabernacle, and entering into the joy of its Lord. Her mother laid her hand on her eyes, and they were closed on this world for ever !

The foregoing notes of Matilda’s conversations

are given strictly, as far as possible, in her own words ; but they constitute no more than *specimens* of the topics on which she expatiated—of her views of divine truth—and her experience as a follower of the Lamb. They are a mother's imperfect recollections of what passed when death was not thought to be in the cup, associated with anticipations which then prevailed, or were cherished in opposition to secret forebodings, of future days of sanctified delight in the newly discovered tie, which she felt uniting their hearts, as together “ bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord.” But however imperfect, they testify in language, sufficiently distinct, to the power of divine grace : “ Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

In its simplest view, the saving work of the Spirit consists in convincing of sin, and leading the soul, under this operation, to an implicit and exclusive reliance upon Christ for salvation. There is a clear perception of the evil lamented, and also the humiliation which this must ever induce, connected with a most hearty concurrence in God's appointed way of deliverance—a joyful acceptance of the truth that reveals it—and a steadfast regarding of the object of faith, Christ, for all the soul requires. Be the course of the

believer long or short, in passing through this wilderness, such is his experience in the beginning and to the end of his pilgrimage, embracing continued discoveries of his own unworthiness on the one hand, and of the mercy of God in Christ on the other, his life being a life of *faith* in Him “who loved him and gave himself for him.” And be he young or old, under the influence of this knowledge of himself as a sinner, and of God as his Saviour, sin is crucified, and spiritual graces grow and abound ; he lives to Christ and he dies in the Lord. Judging by this rule, we believe our dear child was born of the Spirit, and that she now inherits the promises. A sense of sin humbled her in the dust, but a knowledge of Christ produced the lively hope which belongs only to them that are his. She lived, yet not she, but Christ lived in her.

To what but to the effectual and saving operations of the Eternal Spirit can be ascribed the graces which she exhibited—the peace, patience, love, joy, longings for conformity to the will of God, and for separation from the world in heart and in practice ? The carnal mind, which is enmity against Him, never was adorned with fruit like this. And to what shall we ascribe the victory over death vouchsafed to her ? Never, in

any sick-room, did his presence cause less dismay, though he came, too, at a time that we thought not of. It was not that his terrors were veiled, for the address to her little sister showed that the noisomeness of the grave was before the eyes of the youthful sufferer—"to corruption," she said, "thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister." It was not that, by powers of reasoning or philosophic conclusions, she had quelled the tumult of nature, shrinking from the fearful contest—such defensive armour she had none. Neither did the insensibility of delirium conduct her, as in a troubled dream, beyond the precincts of life; for never was even the victim of a violent end more vividly conscious, until the infliction of the fatal stroke, than she. It was not boldness of character causing her to repel fear, for she was constitutionally timid; nor ignorance, to rest as a thick cloud on the world of spirits, concealing the tribunal at which she was about to appear; for, versed in the letter of the Scriptures, she knew the "terror of the Lord." Nor, finally, was it consciousness of innocence, or reflections on a well-spent life, operating as a deceitful opiate; for her convictions were all of sin. How, then, came death to be despoiled of his terrors? Purely through faith.

which is of grace, sovereign and efficacious—faith in Him who hath taken away the sting of the last enemy for his redeemed, and who can give not only protection from his power, but deliverance also from his fear. As a little child she had received the kingdom of God ; and He who carries the lambs in his bosom, exalted her above the darkness and alarm that have many a time surrounded the death-bed of aged Christians, and conveyed her thus, in perfect peace, to those mansions where are the “ small and great,” and where the song of Moses and of the Lamb is for ever sung.

Had she been spared in the world, she would, doubtless, have been exposed to many temptations. She would have heard, and read, and seen what might bewilder, perplex, or mislead. Her musical talent, remarkable in one of her age, might have proved a snare. Under evil influences she might again and again have been turned aside, and painful experiences, even falls with bruises and wounds, might have been connected with restorations to the simplicity of faith, and joy in the Lord. Preserved by Him who had called her, the journey would have been *safe*, however beset with trials and sorrows, and all must have been well at last ; but who can say

that her life would have so testified to the sovereignty as well as the power of divine grace, or that her departure would have been so triumphant? It pleased the Lord to bring her by a near path across the barren desert, and to carry her, as upon eagles' wings, over the swellings of Jordan—"for his is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory."

During my short absence, I had received regular intimations of Matilda's state of health. The accounts were all favourable, but not such as to dispel anxiety. Earnestly longing to be restored to my place by her sick-bed, I left Glasgow, on my way home, late on the Monday evening, after the services of the thanksgiving day. My route was circuitous, as I intended to pass a single day with a dear brother, who had been recently visited by the heaviest of all domestic afflictions. This accomplished, I proceeded on my journey. Within two days' travel of home, viz., on the Friday, I received a letter which had been written there on Monday. It was not so favourable as former ones; but had not my mind already begun to be filled with evil forebodings, it could not have excited great alarm.

Whoever is acquainted with the tumult of a Highland steam-boat, during a dark and bois-

terous night, will be able to judge how ill suited to my state of mind were the circumstances by which I was surrounded ; but even in such as those, the soul may have communion with Him whose presence can give peace, and “ keep the heart and mind.” I looked eagerly for the morning ; for I expected, soon after its arrival, to be landed at a point little more than forty miles from home, and calculated that, by the good hand of God upon me, I should, ere the day terminated, find myself again in the midst of my family. My anticipations of the tidings which the conveyance, by which I was to travel, might bring me were various ; but once only did a fear pass across my mind that I should not find Mätilda alive, and the suggestion was banished as an unwarranted intrusion. Long before we reached the shore, my eye had sought the conveyance which I expected to be in waiting ; and at last I discovered it in charge of a pious schoolmaster from our parish. His presence startled me, but I explained the circumstance to myself, by recollecting that our servant must have been busily occupied with the spring labour ; yet the explanation was not satisfactory. I leapt ashore, and ran up to him. “ How is all at home ? ” was my anxious inquiry. “ Well,” was the answer,

and I was presented with a letter superscribed by my dear wife. It was sealed with black, but so were all the others I had received from her since my departure, for we were in mourning for my brother's wife. "How is Matilda?" There was hesitation, and a look which did not relieve me—still I expected to hear no more than that she was beyond hope of recovery; but the answer came at last,—“She is dead!”

Why should I obtrude on the reader the anguish of that moment, and the heavy grief of that tedious day. After more than *thirteen* years of uninterrupted domestic prosperity, death had at length entered our dwelling, and I was now returning to a sorrowing family, to whom I had never before returned but joyful to them rejoicing. But I was in some measure made to hear the voice,—“Be still, and know that I am God,” and enabled to respond,—“What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” It was late when I arrived at the manse; and I entered my wife's apartment ere she knew I had come. Friends who were present retired, and we were left alone to mingle our tears in all the consciousness of “bitterness for a first-born.” The grace vouchsafed my beloved partner had been wonderful; and she had

partaken plentifully of the mercy and faithfulness of our covenanted God. She had been permitted the high privilege of ministering to both the soul and body of our departed child in her latter end, and of witnessing the triumphant close of that solemn scene. To me this was denied ; and many painful thoughts filled my mind, in connection with this appointment of the sovereign disposer of all events. But if separated from the death-bed of one I loved so tenderly, it was in the path of duty ; and though the trial was felt, I was, in a measure, enabled to say—" It is well." We were not yet out of the furnace : many such duties as I lamented not being permitted to perform for dear Matilda, awaited me ; and had the occasions been then foreseen which were about to call for those, how altered in character, or how subdued, must have been our present grief ! It is well to remember, that " inconsolable sorrow in such cases " as ours, " however admired by the world, is rebellion against the appointment of God, and the offspring of unbelief ; that grief should no more be *indulged* and *cherished*, than our anger and other passions." * But how gracious is the Lord ! The rod was in his hand ; yet he afflicted not willingly. The array of

* Scott.

coming chastisements was concealed from us, and each stripe, as it fell, was preceded by no terrors. Verily, we may sing of "mercy" with "judgment."

Matilda's mortal remains were laid in the "narrow house appointed for all living" on Tuesday, the 17th April, in the blessed hope of a glorious resurrection. Death had made little change in her appearance. For her years she was naturally tall, and during her illness she had grown much. As I hung over her, on the evening of my arrival at home, and the light which I held in my hand fell upon her features, she seemed as in a peaceful sleep. Her lips, though shrivelled, retained the redness of life, and were not so compressed as to conceal her teeth, which appeared between. Her dark eye-lashes and pencilled eye-brows, contrasted strongly with the marble whiteness of her forehead; and I felt, amidst the stillness of the chamber, as if she were about to awaken from her slumber, and to turn on me the full black eye, beaming with intelligence, which I had so often looked on. Alas! the illusion soon vanished. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," was inscribed throughout on the motionless frame which lay before me; and when I reflected on her early youth and advanced attainments,—the health,—

the sprightly vivacity,—the happy disposition for which she had been distinguished, I could only exclaim—“What hath sin wrought! Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

CHAPTER III.

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" And thou my panting soul with strength  
Didst strengthen inwardly."  
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THE state of the other children excited no apprehension in our minds. The older ones appeared almost recovered from the effects of the epidemic ; and as we looked for the speedy approach of warm weather, which would enable us to remove them for the benefit of change of air, no alarm possessed us on their account. They were confined to the house, indeed, the severity of the season being remarkable ; but this was their only restriction. Our youngest, Jessie, just two years old, was evidently the most weakly ; but she was not confined to bed. Her case appeared in some points to resemble Matilda's ; yet, as she had none of the spasmodic affection which we associated with the fatal termination of her sister's

ailment, and little of her weakness,—moreover, as she every day was carried about in the nurse's arms, and often displayed the cheerfulness of health, no one conceived her to be in danger. The medical attendant, too, had ceased his visits, being equally at ease with ourselves. That her convalescence was less advanced than the others, we ascribed to her aversion to medicine, and her resistance, only occasionally overcome, to the necessary remedies for the removal of the fever which still hung about her.

On Friday of the week on which we had committed Matilda to kindred dust, Jessie appeared greatly improved. We were encouraged in our cheerful anticipations, and our minds were at rest, so far as they could be, under our recent wound. We still had six sweet children ; and though we mourned her departure who had been so bright a pattern to them that remained, we knew that God had taken her ;—she had gone to Christ, which was “ far better ” than to be with us.

On Saturday morning it was thought that an unfavourable change was perceptible in our little darling, not so marked, however, as much to increase our anxiety for her. It was natural that we should now be easily alarmed, and our fears, in so far as they existed, were ascribed to this.

Such means, however, as were thought advisable under circumstances were employed, and we hoped that towards evening their good effects would be evident.

During the forenoon I was busily employed in my study. Soon after mid-day, my wife came to me and said, that Jessie did not seem to improve. She was anxious, but did not fear danger, and I encouraged her as I best could. About two o'clock, I was called to the nursery to see our sweet patient, for she seemed to get worse. Then, indeed, I perceived an alteration, which justified, as I feared, more than the anxiety I had endeavoured to allay. She was in the nurse's arms as usual, but appeared much oppressed, and evidently was in great pain. I did not think that any of those about her had perceived her danger; but the suffering they had seen Matilda endure, and I had not, diminished their alarm under the attack. We soon began to dread that the powers of life were sinking: a warm bath was instantly prepared. Her illness increased rapidly—a little wine and water was administered; but we soon too clearly saw that the hand of death was on our tender infant. We were not prepared for this shock; but "the Hope of Israel,—the Saviour thereof in the day of trouble," did not

forsake us. To Him she had been devoted by us ever since he gave her being ; and we now kneeled down, and together called on His holy name in her behalf. Soul and body were commended to him in the everlasting covenant, and Christ with all his benefits accepted by us, as her parents, for her. The moment was one of deep emotion and awful solemnity. We felt the presence, and in this providence heard the voice, of Him who " openeth and no man shutteth," and in whose hands alone are " the keys of hell and of death." How striking his sovereignty, and vain as well as sinful, were opposition to his will, " for he giveth not account of any of his matters." We arose from our knees, and in a few moments, after a brief struggle with the last enemy, the spirit of this gentle child had returned to God who gave it.

This new blow, so unexpectedly and at so short an interval, succeeding our other bereavement, was felt as a sore affliction : " The clouds had returned after the rain." We had watched for the morning, and believed its dawn had broke ; but the shades of night had come again, and they seemed to brood on us more deeply than ever. Yet, amidst the darkness, the word of God shone like the pillar of fire in sight of the camp of

Israel. How precious the experience of His people in every age, recorded there, and presented to the eye of faith ! How suited to us the history of patient Job,—the repeated infliction of evil in such rapid succession,—the answer made to every unbelieving suggestion, whether from within or from without,—the manifestation of human weakness on the one hand, with that of divine grace, forbearance, and power, on the other ; and the “ end of the Lord ” in all the providence ! Hard thoughts were suppressed and silenced ; and amidst our sorrow we were soothed and invigorated by the consideration, that the same mercy which upheld Him now sustained us, and that in our great weakness the strength of the Lord should be more signally perfected.

The cheering circumstances of Matilda's end were wanting in that of our youngest child ; but believing her to be in the covenant, as the offspring of parents who professed to have accepted Christ for themselves and their children, we looked upon her as taken away from the evil to come, and as called thus speedily to join her glorified sister in the realms of bliss ! Did we wish them back again ? Ah, no ! we could not ; but we entered into David's experience, when “ he arose from the earth, and washed and anointed him-

self, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped," saying of his departed child, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Our recollections of the gentle infant thus removed from us, were all soothing and pleasant. She had just begun, with her artless prattle, to delight her mother's heart, and she was the object of the constant caresses of her brothers and sisters. It was grateful to our feelings to recall her stillness and solemnity of manner at worship, and the regularity with which she, evening and morning, kneeled down to lisp her infant prayers. Her natural timidity and tenderness of feeling seemed to us now to have foretold, that she was not for the storms of the world, and we could not mourn when we thought that she would never encounter them. Matilda's death seemed to open up a train of thought, if we may so speak of one of such tender age, to which she had before been a stranger. If she had heard of death, certainly no idea had been associated with the term ; no suspicion existed in her mind of the evil which it expressed. She and her younger brother seemed amazed at the sorrow that pervaded the family, but they could not partake of it. It seemed to surprise her especially, that Matilda was not

now attended as she used to be ; and she constantly urged the nurse to carry her to the room where she lay, and there never tired to look in the face of the dead. We were much affected with this in all the children. They seldom remained long away from the chamber of death ; they would themselves remove the cloth from their sister's face, and gaze in solemn attitude, recalling the words she had spoken to them, and all their happy intercourse together. " Poor Tildy ! " Jessie used to say, " poor Tildy—not well — Tildy sleep — soon well — poor Tildy ! " Her only impression seemed to be, that death was a long sleep, and she every day expected, as we thought, that Matilda was to awake, and be to her what she had wont to be. And is not death a blessed sleep to the child of God, and will not such as " sleep in Jesus " have a glorious awakening ? " Sin reigned " in this sweet infant " unto death ; " but were we not warranted to believe that " grace also reigned " in her " through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord ? " Or, did we err in following her too, with the eye of faith, into his presence, who had seemed to say to us, " Suffer these little children to come unto me, and forbid them not ? "

On Saturday, the 21st April, Jessie died. Next day I preached from Rev. vii. 13-15, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." On the preceding Sabbath I had not preached,—a valued friend supplied my place, and I now endeavoured to improve the afflictive dispensations in our family to a sympathising and deeply affected congregation.

On the 25th, she was interred, being laid on Matilda's left hand, the coffins touching each other, both being mantled by the same turf!

But our trial was not yet past. The Lord still sat as a refiner, and the furnace had not hitherto been heated as it was his sovereign and gracious will it should be. We had already lost our youngest as well as our oldest, and again we were about to be called upon to part with a youngest, also in the tender years of infancy.

Christian parents have consolations of a peculiar kind, in the death of their infant offspring. They are in the covenant with themselves, and

have, in secret, and before men, been solemnly dedicated to their Father in heaven. Christ is thus their Head and Saviour. "Of such," he declared, "is the kingdom of heaven." Commenting on this passage, Mr Scott remarks, "The expression may also intimate, that the kingdom of *heavenly glory* is greatly constituted of such as die in their infancy. Infants are as capable of regeneration as grown persons; and there is ground to conclude, that all those who have not lived to commit actual transgressions, though they have shared in the effects of the first Adam's offence, will also share in the blessings of the second Adam's gracious covenant,—without their personal faith and obedience, but not without the regenerating influence of the Spirit of Christ. Whilst we teach our children, as they become capable of learning, how ready the condescending Son of God is to answer their lisping petitions, and to accept of them as his disciples; we may be well satisfied that he has taken to his heavenly kingdom such of them as have died in infancy; for, doubtless, the covenant is made with the believer *for the good of this part of his offspring in an especial manner*. If, then, Christian parents have their beloved branches cropt in the bud, they cannot, surely, have cause to complain;

or to think much of their pain, care, or trouble, when they are made the instruments of God in raising up children to him, who may inherit his everlasting kingdom."

The ordinance of baptism, of which such children have been partakers, speaks comfort. Previous to its administration, indeed, they are included, by virtue of their parents' faith, in the visible Church of Christ, as being in covenant with him; but baptism, which publicly declares that they are so, and which is then the *sign* of promised blessings, is, in the hour of death, contemplated as the *seal*, or assurance on God's part, that he will accomplish, in their experience, all he has promised. Their safety is not left as a doubtful thing. The great covenant is, in this solemn ordinance, unfolded; it is opened up more fully than many kings and wise men saw it, for the reception of a Christian's child. That child, though an infant of days, is baptized with the same solemn formula as an apostle; and the Triune God of salvation reveals himself in his glory to build the walls of Sion,—to inset the little stones as well as the great; a solemn attestation to the value of the child, and an assurance that its safety is fully provided for.

May not Christian parents come short in pri-

vilege, by failing to plead with sufficient earnestness the benefits of this ordinance in behalf of their children, whilst they are spared to them; and may they not come short in duty, by failing to appeal to it when they address them on spiritual and eternal things? What an appeal had those parents who brought their tender little ones to Christ, to that event, in after years, in dealing with them! How forcibly might they relate to them the solemn circumstances of that affecting occasion; their rejection by the disciples, and Christ's displeasure on this account; his condescension and tender kindness; his taking them up in his arms, putting his hands upon them, and blessing them! How might they speak of the assurance thus afforded that he would redeem the pledge of favour given them,—of the encouragement to pray to him, to rely on his grace, to trust his providence, to wait his coming! If he regarded them with such tenderness on earth, must not his intercessions on their behalf be sure in heaven,—in health, under the pressure of affliction, and amidst the agonies of death! And how irresistible the claim on those favoured children, to fear the name, to love the law, and seek the glory of that gracious and divine Saviour,—that holy, that good man, who had bestowed so preci-

ous a benediction when they knew it not ! If they had been distinguished by such a privilege, —if they had been in his arms who now was “made higher than the heavens,” being the object of adoration to the glorious hosts which surround the throne, did not this constitute an obligation not to be resisted, constraining them to be distinguished by every holy qualification, and every heavenly grace ! But have not Christian parents, *now*, a similar appeal to baptism, in dealing with their offspring, who, in that solemn ordinance, have been surrendered to the same gracious Redeemer, whose Word still testifies to all his people, “The promise is unto you and unto your children.” Let this sacrament, then, be duly exalted ; not only as a source of comfort when disease wastes, and death snatches their jewels away from them, but as a means of exhortation, instruction, and encouragement, while they are left under their charge. They were brought to Christ to be blessed, in the way ordained by himself, and they have been blessed. The thrice holy name of God has been named on them,—the sign of his grace administered by his accredited servant ; why, then, should they be aliens or enemies ; why serve any strange god, or why seek joy elsewhere than in the wells of salvation ?

Our youngest boy, Alexander, had just passed his fourth birth-day. For his years, he was a child of uncommon strength and vigour. His appearance was highly prepossessing; and his generous disposition and vivacity made him a universal favourite. Strangers will naturally be jealous of a parent's description; but such as knew him will not deny that he was a lovely and an engaging child. His robust constitution had resisted the effects of hooping-cough, so that he suffered little from it. The subsequent fever lay long upon him; for his natural liveliness made restraint of any kind so intolerable, that he could with great difficulty be induced to submit to the necessary confinement. He had, however, but for weakness, nearly recovered his usual health.

On the day on which Matilda's coffin was brought to the manse, when I went to the door to meet the tradesmen, I found Alick standing there. The weather was piercingly cold, with sleet and high wind. He had escaped unobserved from the nursery, and, with childish curiosity, was gazing on an object which to him was new. The consequence dreaded ensued,—he had caught a slight cold, and next day suffered a relapse of the fever. He was confined to bed, and we hoped that, under the simple remedies

employed, this new indisposition would soon disappear.

When poor Jessie expired, he was a deeply interested witness of all that passed on that affecting occasion. Our attention was so exclusively and intensely occupied with her case, that we wholly overlooked the circumstance of poor Alick's presence. When my eye caught him, after all was over, he was resting on his elbow, having raised himself in bed to observe more distinctly what was going forward. Never shall I forget the expression of his intelligent countenance, when his eye caught mine. It was as if he wished me to be comforted, and to comfort him, by giving assurance that no evil had occurred, and that no new sorrow had come upon us. Alas ! dear boy, little did we think that his own days had drawn to so narrow a span, and that he should so soon follow his darling sister, the sharer of his joys, and often his comforter in many a little sorrow !

On observing our mistake, to have permitted him to witness Jessie's decease, we had him wrapped in blankets, and carried to a warm and well seasoned room in another part of the house. For a day or two no apprehension was entertained for him ; but then, as he did not decidedly im-

prove, medical advice was called to our aid. The opinion of both the gentlemen who visited him was favourable,—they thought the ailment slight ; and so should we, in ordinary circumstances, have done ; but our past sad experience utterly forbade our being at ease in witnessing the symptoms manifested. These were such as to produce a fear of *water in the head* ; and we trembled to think of the sufferings, to him and to us, which must ensue. Although the medical gentlemen did not willingly admit their fears of this dreadful complaint, we thought we could perceive it was from compassion to us. Their prescriptions, when we afterwards reflected on their character, showed their apprehensions ; but, at the time, we were too anxious to listen to any opinion which contradicted our impressions, and afforded, if not rest, at least temporary respite, to our aching hearts.

At no period of our trial were we more impressed than now with the truth, that the Lord's compassion is that of a father for his children. A new affliction was to come—our good, His glory, required it ; but it came not so as to overwhelm. Step by step we were let down to the depths of this sorrow ; and although, in course of the ten days during which we watched and prayed

by our dying boy, the furnace appeared as if seven times heated, yet then, more than at any other period of our suffering, did we feel most sensibly His presence and faithfulness who has said, "When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee,"—the interpositions of his providence, the supplies of his grace, and the consolations of his Spirit. "Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy."

The remarks which I have ventured to introduce in the beginning of this Narrative were now, as at other seasons of our affliction, strongly suggested, viz., the possibility that true religion may exist in the soul of a child, whilst his natural vivacity and very childishness conceal it from the view of human eye, until disease comes, and, the flow of animal spirits subsiding under its influence, gives opportunity to the latent grace to appear. Poor Alick had not yet learned to read ; but, from the very dawn of intellect, he would listen with earnest and attentive ear to those parts of Scripture which he could understand when read to him ; and a "pretty story from the Bible" had always charms for which play and every thing else would at any time be abandoned. It was a bribe which secured quiet on all occasions, and

the attraction which drew him particularly to his elder brother, and knit his heart to his.

More than a year before the period of Alick's illness, a little incident occurred in the nursery, which, as it produced a strong sensation there, and deeply affected him, may be related. It was soon after the recovery from measles, already alluded to. One night a sister, about double his age then, was observed to be pensive and much dejected. She was asked what was wrong. Her answer was, "Can you tell me what a soul is?" Her oldest brother began to explain that it is not the body, although residing in it,—that when the body dies the soul continues to live,—and that the souls of good people go to heaven, but those of the wicked to hell. She became much agitated, and cried, "Oh what shall I do, what shall I do. I told a lie, and my soul must go to hell!" As she was in real distress of mind and wept bitterly, the attention of all the children was attracted to her, and to the subject under discussion. The offence to which she alluded had occurred more than a year before. She had by accident burned her pinafore, and on being charged with it, denied the fact. When the truth was discovered she was brought to me, and in warning her of the nature of her offence, I quoted

some of the passages of Scripture which speak of the doom of "liars." Her brother endeavoured to appease her, by telling of pardon by the blood of Christ, and assuring her, that if she asked she would obtain forgiveness. Next morning the incident was related to mamma ; and as the child's distress continued, she spoke to her on the subject. She confirmed what her brother had stated ; but added, that pardon was not all that was required. She must ask and receive a new heart and right spirit, which Christ was as willing to give as the pardon of sin. " But, mamma, I do not know how to pray for it,—will you teach me ?" She fell on her knees, and having gone through her usual prayer, raised her eyes earnestly to her mother, saying, " Tell me now, mamma." This was accordingly done in a few plain words ; and both during the continuance of this impression, which lasted long, and since, they have been in constant use. The other children were solemnly affected,—and none more than dear Alick. Never thereafter did he lay his head on his pillow, or arise from sleep, without lisping, " O Lord, create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me ; take away this hard and stony heart, and give me a heart to love and serve thee, for Christ's sake ;" preceded by the simple lines,

“ This night I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep ;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

OR,

“ The Lord hath kept me through the night,
And brought me to the morning light ;
O may he keep me all this day,
And make me walk in his good way.”

Subsequently to Jessie's death, a very marked change was apparent in his whole manner and conduct. He had formerly disliked to be spoken to of death. “ Alick not going to die. Alick soon well,” he used to say, when his liability to death and the necessity of preparation were set before his mind. He now seemed much occupied with the subject, and no such aversion was manifested when it was introduced. Every medical prescription was cheerfully submitted to, and the most nauseous draughts were swallowed without a murmur. Whilst it was gratifying to mark this change in his disposition, we were cheered by the hope, that the final result might yet be favourable. His natural liveliness, which continued, contributed likewise to deceive us ; and although none of the alarming symptoms gave way, we ceased not to expect the natural

benefit of the full employment of the suitable means. We were ready to accept as a token for good, his willing submission to medical prescriptions, and we looked hopefully for the blessing which could make them effectual.

In the beginning of his illness, the aching of his head, which, however, was but occasional, seemed the chief suffering. "Sore, sore," he would say, laying his little hand on his burning brow. This, by and by, seemed to cease, and then, when asked what pained him, "Oh ! me so tired, papa, so *vely* tired," was the answer which always wrung our hearts ; unable as we were to minister any relief, until at length he became unconscious, as we hoped and believed, of all the pain and misery wherewith he was afflicted.

The *coma* or stupor, symptomatic of this direful complaint, did not make its decided appearance until the last week of his life ; but for eight days before he expired, he had not above one, or at most two, short intervals of consciousness. Previous to these days, he often asked his mother to read "pretty story from the Bible," and would listen with a pleased and happy temper to all that was said to him on spiritual matters. Again and again did he request to hear about the "little boy who had sore head," as he expressed it,—

the Shunamite's son, the mercy shown to whom seemed to fill his mind and to delight his heart. He dwelt on the thought that "God had made him well;" and in his own affliction, we believe he looked to the same source,—his hope and expectation,—as a child might do.

It is difficult to say how small a portion of the living seed sown in a child's soul the Eternal Spirit may render effectual, and to what degree he may sanctify such afflictions as our dear boy experienced. To us it was, indeed, consolatory to see his eye turned towards "the light shining in a dark place;" to the Word of God; to all the truths extracted therefrom, which, in various shapes, he had committed to memory, and to perceive also the peace and patience vouchsafed whilst the heavy hand of approaching dissolution was laid upon him. In the heart of a child so young, there could, in such circumstances, be no guile; and if sincerity reigned in his feeble efforts to embrace the Saviour,—that Saviour who rebuked his disciples when they forbade such to be brought to him,—may we not believe it was heaven-born and accepted?

"If babes so many years ago,
His tender pity drew,
He will not surely let me go
Without a blessing too."

The first indication of approaching lethargy appeared on Tuesday, the first of May ; and although from this day forth it gained upon the gentle sufferer, all communication with his mind did not cease until the beginning of the succeeding week. Even then, though it was the last of his short earthly career, once or twice he revived, so as to address us in words of intelligence and comfort. We needed comfort ; for the recollection of our past bereavements began to fade before the anticipation of another clad in terrors which they had not had.

It is difficult for those who enjoy the constant and ready benefit of medical aid, to judge of the distraction of mind which the want of this privilege, in such cases as ours, produces. Material injury may be the result of acting or of refraining from action, and in either case the reproach of mind thereafter is painful beyond description. That in a parish of at least *twenty* miles square, there should not be even one resident practitioner, may surprise some not acquainted with such a state of things ; yet, in the Highlands, it is no uncommon occurrence. Daily visits, therefore, are out of the question ; and in a wide country where many calls arise for the services of those useful functionaries, thinly scattered over its sur-

face as they are, days may pass, when they are sent for, ere their presence can be obtained. On more than one occasion, during our dear boy's illness, we were deeply affected by the providential circumstances which placed within our easy reach, in the hour of greatest need, the gentleman who had charge of his case. We were made to feel, that "God, who comforteth those who are cast down," had sent him, if not to cure our child, at least to soothe for a time our disturbed spirits. Because we recognised in those occurrences *His* doing, they were at once wonderful and precious in our eyes.

We could enter fully into the "nobleman's" experience, when, with thrilling importunity, he said, "Sir, come down ere my child die!" These words became common in our lips, addressed to the great Physician, who, when they were first spoken, heard and answered. And did He not hear and regard the same appeal now? Yes. What he said to the "nobleman," he said to us. "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." We were made to remember, that "signs and wonders" ought not to be necessary to the exercise of faith; "blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed;" and though our child

should be taken from us, a humble assurance was wrought in our minds that our prayer was not "put away," and that the presence of the Son of God, "mighty to save," was vouchsafed us in the furnace.

There are but few additional particulars in the story of this dear infant ; for the disease made painful progress, and the prostration of strength was rapid and overwhelming.

"Where Jessie, mamma,—where Matilda?" he said, on one occasion, soon after the stupor had commenced to exert its influence, as he opened his eyes and looked at us sitting by him.

"They are with Christ in heaven," was the answer.

"Heaven *vely* pretty place, mamma?"

"Yes. Would you like, Alick, to be with Jessie and Matilda in that pretty place?"

"Yes, me like *vely* much ; but," seeing our tears, he added, "me rather stay here, and me be good boy and always say *me* prayers."

He then asked his mother to read to him, and whilst she was engaged in this, the sleep from which he had just awakened regained possession of him.

Once more only did he, after this, so far recover as to converse distinctly with us, and it

was but for a little moment. He awoke from the stupor, and looking at us, as we were about to give him something, said, with a sweet smile, as if some vision had just been passing before his eyes,—

“Me know place where two pretty lasses,—pretty, pretty place.”

“Christ has taken them there,” we said, “and he is coming to take Alick to be with them.”

He looked at us, as if he understood what we meant ; his eyes grew heavy, and in a little he was lost in sleep, which nothing could break.

Before the lethargy had exerted its full influence over him, and when he had become so feeble that he could no longer place himself upon his knees, evening and morning, he was heard whispering his infant supplications as he lay in helpless exhaustion on his uneasy bed. At last, when his mind became enshrouded in increased darkness, he seemed incapable of retaining the ideas, and forgot even the words so often used by him, and in this painful state he would say to us, with a melancholy tone, “Tell me *me* prayers,—not know what say,” and would repeat after us as we directed him.

During the last week, as already stated, he was lost to us. More than once he seemed just about to sink under his heavy load of suffering, and we

besought the Lord for him, as one at the point of death. The recoveries on these occasions appeared very singular. After his features became fixed, and the pulse ceased to be perceptible, except at intervals, when even sinapisms applied to the soles of his feet failed to stimulate the circulation, the indefatigable exertions of his medical attendant, in the use of various cordials would be blessed, and the darling patient would revive so as to breathe freely, and appear in a composed slumber. Thus the taper of life, ere it went out, threw up its fitful gleams ; and thus the Hearer of Prayer animated and encouraged our persevering supplications, whilst he gave opportunity to continue in them. How earnestly did we plead that He, with whom nothing is impossible, might prolong his days, and spare us the pang of a third separation after so short an interval ; but with what equal earnestness did we ask that our child might be numbered with the redeemed,—those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and in whom his Spirit dwells ! And did we err in believing the secret support vouchsafed in our trying hour to be the earnest of God's accepting our prayers, and of his willingness to exceed abundantly all our desires and thoughts ?

His sufferings towards the close became dread-

ful. On Saturday the 12th, we more than once conceived that he was expiring, and we kneeled by his bed under this impression,—accepting Christ for him, devoting him to the Lord, pleading that, in the furnace into which he was cast, the dross of sin might be purged away, and his redeemed soul prepared for the heavenly inheritance, and humbly imploring, too, that his sufferings might be diminished. In the night he appeared much relieved, and on Sabbath he still survived, though it was evident the hand of death pressed heavily on him. Towards afternoon, symptoms of convulsions appeared. They increased. O what a sight is the approach of the “last enemy,” thus exerting his power! and what consolation to be able to think that our helpless child, though the victim of that power, was unconscious of it! The struggle was long,—all that human art and ceaseless attention could do to alleviate the agony of this dark hour was done. It ceased at last, and a little past midnight our lovely boy, heaving three deep sighs, yielded up his spirit into the hands of its faithful Creator!

How dear this child was to us our heavenly Father knows, and how deep, therefore, the wound inflicted by his untimely end. Yet we enjoyed a soothing persuasion, that his disem-

bodied soul had joined his beloved sisters, before the throne, where the pang of no separation will ever overtake them. We reflected on his infantile age,—on the humbling and apparently gracious effects, through the power of God, which the affliction he had witnessed produced,—on the evident employment of instruction, imparted in days of health, for separating his affections from the world and raising his thoughts to heaven. Above all, we reflected, with gratitude and humble confidence, on the spirit of supplication which we so remarkably felt poured on ourselves during all the term of his illness, protracted as it was beyond our expectations ; and which we knew to be poured not on us alone, but on others also in his behalf. As each of our dear children had been called away, we published the event, saying, “ perhaps some Christian friend may be induced to pray for us.” And during the closing scene of Alick’s life, when sympathy was strongly awakened, our hope in this was strikingly realized. Pious friends, near and at a distance, as several have since informed me, were moved to pray for us, and especially for our dying boy. We reflected, that if the Lord gave this spirit of supplication at such a time,—if he enabled ourselves to take hold on his strength, and raised up

others to plead for us, it was that when thus "inquired of," he might do the thing we asked. For, "this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us : And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

On the 17th of May, exactly one month from the date of dear Matilda's funeral, the mortal remains of our beloved Alexander were laid in the grave. He was placed on her right hand, his coffin touching her's on that side as Jessie's did on the left.

"The voice said, Cry. And he said what shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth ; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it : surely the people is grass."

CHAPTER IV.

“ Those that are broken in their heart,
And grieved in their minds,
He healeth, and their painful wounds
He tenderly upbinds.”

BUT the story of our sufferings ends not here ; for our cup of sorrow was not yet full. And when I trace these words and look back, I feel amazed how nature supported the accumulated load of affliction wherewith it pleased God to visit us. Nature, did I say ? Alas ! long ere this it had been overwhelmed, but for that grace which was vouchsafed, and to the power of which we were such striking witnesses. “ Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits.”

“ Trials must and will befall ;
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all,
This is happiness to me.”

Our second daughter, Ann, had just passed

her *ninth* birth-day. She was one of those rare and happy beings who make friends of all who know them. Her natural temper and disposition were particularly amiable; and, pleased and contented with every thing herself, she never harboured a suspicion of a contrary feeling in the mind of others. Like her sister, she had been apt to learn; and, besides having her mind stored with the truths of Scripture, and many psalms and hymns, she, too, had made considerable progress in secular education.

She had suffered little from hooping-cough and the subsequent fever, and until near the close of Alick's illness, was considered quite recovered. Some days before his death she complained of pain in her side, but a sinapism and some simple medicine removed it, and she was again quite well. The fluctuation of feeling, of hope and fear, which agitated us with regard to Alick, was not communicated to the other children; for it was evident, that they all began to tremble as if they were set apart to death; and to feel as if one after the other was to be smitten down. We sought to cheer them, and to support their minds, as we best could, by referring to His grace and mercy, in whose hands their life was; but at length it became impossible for us to conceal our

own dejection and uneasiness about their dear brother.

On one of the days towards the end of Alick's last week Ann came to her mother and said, "How is poor Alick to-day?" She was tenderly attached to him, and from the beginning of his attack, evinced the deepest interest in his fate. Her mother's answer was not encouraging; on which she added with an expression of the deepest anxiety, "Surely Alick is not going to die, mamma?" Her mother's look told but too truly her fears; and though she said much to soothe her under her evident distress, the shock to her feelings was a severe one. Immediately thereafter, as she told us subsequently, she felt a sudden pain dart through her head, which never forsook her.

That evening, it was thought advisable to apply leeches to her forehead. Next day, though she got out of bed and manifested her usual cheerful equanimity, the leeching was repeated, and other means employed with apparently good effect; but on Sunday it was necessary to confine her to bed, and blistering on the back of the head was added to the other treatment. Nothing of all this would, probably, have been resorted to, but for our past experience, which quickened

our apprehensions, and induced our medical friend to anticipate danger by decided measures. It is gratifying now to think, that we were thus directed in Providence, and that what man could do, was done for our beloved child.

On Sabbath afternoon, our oldest boy was sent to sit with poor Ann in her room, whilst the family partook of a hasty meal. When dinner was past and all had retired, or returned to their duty by the sick-beds, he came in and sat down by me, with an expression of face which told that he had something to communicate. I asked him whether he had had any conversation with his sister on serious matters. He answered that he had been conversing with her, and that she was under great concern for her soul. She had been desirous to unburden her mind to her mother when reading the Scriptures to her in the morning, but had been prevented from several causes, and she now felt great anxiety that we should both come to her apartment, and give her an opportunity of speaking to us. Alick still survived, though life was ebbing fast,—he filled our thoughts, and Ann's case had not yet excited any alarm. This message, however, brought us quickly to her bed-side.

We besought her to open her mind freely and

fully, and encouraged her to speak and conceal nothing. On this she began in a manner, and with an expression the most touching, to confess her exceeding sinfulness. She said that she had been long thoughtless and indifferent about her soul, although she had often felt convictions; and her mind seemed deeply distressed with the recollection, that even on the day of Matilda's funeral, she had been so light-hearted as to be amusing herself with toys. She lamented in strong terms that she had never been doing good in the world, nor glorifying God,—the chief end for which she had been created. Her humiliation was very striking; every look and expression showed it, so that after listening long to her declarations of self-abasement, and in various ways searching her views and feelings, I felt within myself a blessed assurance that the law had come home to her soul with divine power.

During the whole of this day, and for two days previous, she had been, as was thought, in a nervous state. She appeared unwilling to be left alone, and grasped convulsively the hand of any one whose charge it was to be with her. I was surprised to be informed of this; for all the children were trained to be alone in the dark, or otherwise, as circumstances required, and they

knew no superstitious fears. It was conscience that had awaked, and under saving conviction of sin, she had not yet attained to the liberty and love which deliver from bondage and cast out fear. We were much affected with the tenderness manifested by one little trait. She had, it would appear, a long time before, informed against poor Alick in some slight offence of which he had been guilty. As they were warmly attached, he had felt acutely the accusation coming from her, and had wept bitterly under the trial. The incident now recurred to her mind, and, sincerely grieved by the recollection, she asked me, with tears in her eyes, if I thought Alick remembered it? He was dying, and her heart was racked with the thought, that she had ever produced one uneasy feeling in his mind. Both tables of the law were condemning her,—she had transgressed against God, and she had not loved her brother as she should have done. She now ended the disclosure of her experience by saying, with a tone and expression of countenance which melted my heart, “Oh, papa, do you think Christ will save me?”

Surely here was an opportunity, of no ordinary kind, to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation,—and with what feelings was it embraced! The

large tears were rolling over her face, and her attitude was that of deep attention. I assured her, on the authority of one commissioned to do so, that the Gospel was for her, and for all like her, convinced of sin. Texts with which she was familiar were quoted. The willingness of God to receive her into his spiritual family was set before her from them,—the love of Christ for sinners,—his faithfulness—he had never refused, never failed any penitent applicant,—his being far more anxious to save her than she was to be saved by him,—the infinite merit of his great atonement,—his all prevailing intercession, and the certainty that none who came to him should be lost. She seemed, like Lydia, to have her heart opened, and immediately to receive the Gospel with the simplicity and confidence with which a little child, or those made like unto them, only can. The Spirit who had convinced her of sin, appeared to convince her, with equal power, of mercy in Christ ; and from that moment forth she had peace in believing. It was remarkable, that the feeling which had been ascribed to nervousness never more returned,—she was delivered from the deep pit and miry clay,—her mind was thoroughly relieved,—its load was gone,—the

darkness had passed,—and whilst her conversation indicated increasing spirituality, there was no recurrence of the bondage of fear.

No new information was communicated to our beloved child in what had been spoken. With the peculiar truths of the Gospel she was previously well acquainted ; for at our Sabbath evening exercises of proving doctrines from Scripture, the “proofs” adduced by Ann were always nearly equal to those of her elder sister and brother. The calm which succeeded her previous agitation, arose not, then, from new knowledge communicated to her mind, but it was grace causing her to receive the glorious truths of “the Word,” as addressed to herself ; it was faith, wrought by the Spirit in her soul, appropriating Christ and his salvation, thereby making her to pass from death to life. How truly, then, does the Lord, in the experience, and out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, perfect praise ! The great exercise, and difficult work of faith, is to see sin and Christ at the same time,—to be penetrated with a lively sense of our demerit, and absolute freedom from condemnation. The more we know of both, the nearer approach we make to heaven ; and here we behold, in a measure, this free gift of God bestowed, in sovereign grace, upon a little child.

“ Papa,” she said, after a short interval, “ I know that I shall never rise from this bed. I have no desire to return to the world, to be exposed to its sins and temptations ; indeed I am not sorry to leave it.”

No one then thought her to be in danger. I replied, accordingly, that I hoped she would soon recover, and be spared long ; adding, that by usefulness in the world, and by advancing the cause of Christ, she might glorify God and be happy. She assented to this ; but said, that now her sorrow to part with us was the only thing which could make her desire to live.

“ What is the world !” she exclaimed. “ See the changes that have taken place among ourselves,—and who would desire to live in it !”

She then expressed strong desire for holiness, and deliverance from sin ; entreated us to be praying for her ; said she knew we had been doing so, and seemed filled with gratitude that she had parents who could minister to her in spiritual things. Great anxiety was manifested by her that the other children should be concerned for their souls ; and she seemed to tremble that any of them should be careless, as she was once.

It is impossible to describe what we felt ; we wept—but they were tears of joy. I had not

been permitted to see Matilda on her death-bed ; but I was fully persuaded now of what had been told me—that no relation of particulars could convey a correct impression of the holy influence which pervaded the place where she lay. I experienced it now. I felt that I stood upon holy ground,—where the Lord was doing wonders amongst us ; in wrath remembering mercy, and, in midst of the tempest, saying, “ Be of good cheer ; it is I, be not afraid.” In the next room our sweet boy was passing away. In his case we would have had “ signs and wonders,”—an infant to speak as one advanced in knowledge, that our longing desires for his soul might be sensibly satisfied. Though this had been denied, grace was given to believe the goodness of the Lord to him ; but if a shade of darkness still lingered around his bed, it now was dispelled. Here there was light, which extended thither, and was reflected back on our downcast spirits. We felt that the Lord had heard our importunate supplication, and that to us, as to the nobleman, in faithfulness he said, “ Go thy way, thy son liveth.” A sweet persuasion of his sovereign loving-kindness filled our souls ; and it needed not the request of poor Ann, gently made, to cause us kneel together before Him, and pour out

our hearts in grateful acknowledgments and earnest petitions for our dying children.

The last hymn which Ann had committed to memory, was that marked 44th in our Church collection of Paraphrases. With the view of calling my attention to its beauties,—for it seemed to have made a deep impression on her own mind,—she began to repeat it :

“ Behold the Saviour on the cross,
A spectacle of woe !
See from his agonizing wounds
The blood incessant flow.”

She stopped, and proposed some striking questions, with reference to the rejection of our Lord by the Jews. The heinousness of their sin, in being guilty of this, appeared to awe her soul ; and she wept when speaking of his sufferings at their hands. But the point on which she principally dwelt, was God’s long-suffering towards those who had so greatly provoked him. Of this she had lately been reading, and her soul was now fed by the truth, that He has not cast off Israel.

“ Think, papa, of His infinite mercy,” she said, “ when, although they have brought such judgments on themselves by their sin, He still pre-

serves them, will yet be their God, and restore them to their own land."

During all the evening, she poured out the feelings of her heart in a strain of highly spiritual conversation. Like Elihu, she was "full of matter; the Spirit within constrained her, and she spoke that she might be refreshed." She reminded me of many things I had said in sermons preached long before, which, she stated, had never left her mind. She spoke of what had affected her in reading the Scriptures, and pious books. She dwelt, with great interest and feeling, on the providence which had detained them all from church for the winter and spring months; and how much that loss had been made up by her mother's exercises with them.

"O papa, if you had been with us, and seen how happy we were; but all that," she added with a sigh, "is past now."

I remarked, that their absence from public ordinances was of God's appointment, not of their own choice, and that I believed he had blessed this dispensation to them, by the effectual teaching of his Spirit; "O yes," she said, "I think so."

When I listened to the child, whom I had always seen so gay, and apparently so thoughtless, whose artless simplicity I had often fancied in-

compatible with clear understanding, or serious feeling, in religious matters, thus manifest a mind well informed, and a heart tenderly affected, how did God seem to say, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways ;" and what a commentary had we given us on the words of the blessed Saviour, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." We were also deeply impressed with the small share which human instrumentality has in the great work, and how truly "the excellency of the power is of God." This, we perceived, instead of being an inducement to negligence in training our children, is a powerful motive to persevere in even the most inefficient means. How far short we came of other parents, of whom we had read, I often was humbled to think of ; and now that the blessing was truly bestowed, we felt that to *His* name alone belonged the glory.

Then, let those who tremble under a sense of their shortcomings, and who have no confidence in instructions communicated by them, but whose prayers and diligence may, to themselves, even, be an evidence how sincerely they "travail in birth again, until Christ be formed" in their chil-

dren, be encouraged. Let them hope in God,—they may yet praise him ; and while they do hope, let them not slacken their imperfect services. “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand : for thou knowest not whether shall prosper either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”

“ If thou wouldst reap in love,
First sow in holy fear ;
So life a winter’s morn may prove
To a bright endless year.”

The first week of Ann’s illness was one of comparative ease. We encouraged ourselves to believe that the decided measures taken to prevent the progress of any complaint in the head, had been blessed to produce this result ; and as her strength was little affected by previous disease, we hoped, against secret misgivings which began to intrude, that she was not to be taken from us. Her own impression was quite the reverse. Her natural cheerfulness had returned, indeed, but it was chastened by a full consciousness that she lay on her death-bed. It was not the light-heartedness we had been wont to see, but the composure of one who had been made to feel that she stood upon a Rock which no wave

could shake. She was in the region of the shadow of death, but the rays of the Sun of Righteousness were penetrating the gloom, and opening to her view a happy prospect, far beyond the confines of the valley upon which she had entered. Like Israel of old, she knew that the destroying angel was abroad, but she rested under the security of the blood which he would regard. Christ, her passover, had been slain ; she was not only sprinkled with his blood, but she partook of his flesh,—he kept her, therefore, in perfect peace, “ because she trusted in him.”

The composed view which she took of her approaching dissolution, showed the secret but all-sufficient influence by which she was sustained. It is difficult to say whether she conceived her end to be near,—she might probably think it further off a little than it really was,—but she always seemed hurt when any attempt was made to persuade her that her sickness was not unto death. On one of the days of this week, she complained to her mother that a servant, who had come into the room to see her, had said that she should soon be well. “ It was wrong, mamma,” she remarked, “ to say such a thing, as none but God can know whether I shall get well.” Her mother asked if she wished to live ; she he-

sitated, as if unwilling to say any thing that might distress her, and then replied, "It is not my will, mamma, that must be, but God's."

The Scriptures were constantly read to her, at her own request; and we engaged regularly in prayer by her bed. She was herself unremittingly engaged in this duty.

"I hope, my dear Ann, you are enabled to look to Christ, and trust in him?" her mother said to her on one occasion.

"O yes, mamma," was the answer; "and I wish the whole world would come to Him."

On another occasion, when asked if she had been praying, "O yes," she said, "I have been praying for a new heart; I have been asking to be made righteous; and that all of us should be made righteous; and that my heart may be raised entirely off this world."

On a third occasion, when I put the same question to her, the answer was, "I have been praying all day, papa, and have been asking to be made rich in faith. I have prayed that mamma, and you, and all of us, may be made rich in faith. There are many who are rich in money, poor in faith; and many who are poor in money, that are rich in faith. Oh, if we were rich in faith!" Dear child, He who had taught you to pray, was

bestowing greater riches than the treasures of Egypt !

How beautiful do the fruits of the Spirit appear in one of so tender an age ! In the course of this week, she was often leeches on the forehead and temples ; she was bled twice at the arm ; the sore produced by the blister on the back of her neck was kept open, and powerful means employed to promote a plenteous discharge therefrom ; tartaric ointment was rubbed behind her ears, to produce irritation there, to direct the humours from the head ; sinapisms were applied to the soles of her feet ; the most nauseous medicines were swallowed ;—all without the slightest murmur or complaint, nay, with a perpetual smile upon her countenance.

Her resignation was very affecting. “ It is not my will, but God’s now,” was a common expression with her ; indicating the principle of spiritual life within, which produced this “ beauty of holiness ” without. Her trust in the Lord was not less affecting. “ Are you afraid to be bled, Ann ? ” her mother asked, on the first occasion on which this operation was to be performed ; “ for I do not like to see it done, and I would leave the room if you are not alarmed,—you know it is your own papa who is to do it.” “ Mamma, I *am*

afraid," she said, then added, with an expression which told the whole feeling of her soul, "but I know to whom to look."

Towards the end of the first week, notwithstanding all the precautions which had been employed, the pain in the head was not permanently removed ; and, besides the unfavourable symptom of its continuance, she began to tell us that she did not see distinctly,—that objects appeared double to her ; and complained of a tingling pain in one side of her tongue, extending to the fingers of the hand on the same side. On Sabbath the stupor became so manifest, and her articulation so indicative of paralysis, that we could no longer presume to conceal from ourselves the character of the dreadful disease to which she also was about to fall a victim. Indeed, all her symptoms too truly identified her case with that of her little brother ; and we had once more before us the prospect of witnessing the departure of another of our beloved babes, under the most distressing complaint to which children are subject. In a day or two, the deep sleep, which at first appears so like the sleep of health, but which soon betrays its true nature, by startings, grinding of the teeth, and pitiable screamings, began to prevail. Every exertion was made, by an in-

creased application of the means already in use, to alleviate or remove the alarming symptoms ; but all that was effected, was an occasional dispersion of the *coma*, by which gracious opportunities were, in mercy, granted us of knowing that in the dark valley she was preserved and guided by the Shepherd of Israel. The cloud in which her mind was enveloped, while the Eternal Spirit perfected his work in preparing her soul for glory, was occasionally opened, that we might be permitted to know, that God's thoughts towards her were thoughts of peace, not of evil, and that His faithfulness did not fail.

It had been an object of much interest with us, in course of the season, to have our dear children removed from home for the benefit of change of air. Our anxiety on this head grew every day, and with their rapid decrease in number, we felt as if this alone could be the means of preserving any of them to us. Unfavourable appearances, we imagined, began to show themselves in our youngest surviving child ; and although the weather still continued unusually cold, we resolved, under Providence, with whatever hazard, to adopt the measure referred to. The kindness of a gentleman in a neighbouring parish, whose Christian benevolence is so well known,

and who lives but “to do good, and to communicate,” afforded a facility of much importance for carrying this into effect. He placed his yacht at our disposal, which, as it was fitted up with every comfort, secured to our poor invalids all the advantages which could be expected during a sea voyage. A clerical friend kindly agreed to accompany them, as I could not myself leave our dear Ann, and we only waited a favourable hour for embarking them. This measure had been so long delayed, by so many intervening causes, that we every moment feared something would occur in the state of their health to forbid it altogether. But He to whom belong the issues from death was favourable to us: “He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.” “For,” saith he, “I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.”

On the Tuesday of the second week of Ann’s illness, the yacht unfurled her sails in our bay, and we prepared to part—only for a time, as we trusted,—with the three who now remained convalescent, of our once numerous and healthy family. It cannot be wondered at, that on such an occasion we should feel deeply; but the mea-

sure so strongly recommended itself to our minds, as holding out the happy prospect of their recovery, that we were encouraged and comforted under the dispensation. God, we believed, would bless it for the re-establishment of the health of those whom he had yet spared us ; and even should he see meet to deny this, it was so plainly a duty that we could not hesitate.

Our dear Ann, under the excitement of the occasion of their departure, was roused from the lethargy of her complaint. Some one had said to her, “ Ann, would you not like to be going with the rest ? ” A visit to ——— had always been an object of their happiest anticipations, and not to be the companion of her brother and sisters, when about to go there, might well be expected to prove a sore disappointment. Ten days before, she was the gayest in the prospect of the journey, and was preparing herself for it ; now she was left behind—to die ! Her answer to the question showed a heart truly crucified to the world,—for what is the world to a child but that from which it promises itself happiness,—and that she no longer looked to any thing in it as her portion. “ No,” she said, after thinking for a moment, “ I do not wish to go. Christ can make me as happy lying here as they can be

there." Her *manner* fully evinced that this was the conviction of her heart, and that she felt as she spoke.

When equipped in their travelling dresses, and just before leaving the manse, the children came into her room to bid her farewell. The scene which ensued was touching in the extreme. The tie which had so long united them was about to be broken, and they were to see each other no more. Recollections of other days—days never to return,—seemed to rush into their minds; and, young in years, they sighed under the pressure of sorrows which age even has not always known. Ann's heart was tenderly affected. She took them, one after the other, by the hand, holding them firmly in her own. To her brother she said, "Remember you are now the oldest,—you are the head of the rest; O be diligent in prayer for yourself and them, and be sure the Lord will preserve you!" She then addressed her sister next to herself in age,—“Remember your Bible and Catechism,” she said; “and, O, be praying for me!” To her youngest sister she said,—“Remember your prayers, and be obedient to papa and mamma!” She then addressed them all,—“You have been very kind to me—O, farewell! The Lord will regard you for it!”

The friend who was to accompany them in the yacht being present, she said to him,—“ It is so kind of you, Mr ———, to go with them to ———. I thank you for it, and for all the kindness you ever showed us. Ever since you knew us, you werẽ kind to us,—the Lord will regard you for it ; for to all who are merciful and kind, He is merciful. All his own people are so, and none but they are truly so.” “ Farewell !” she said again, with a deep sigh, and kissed the children.

Our hearts bled ; no one present could refrain from tears. But with the dear sufferer the lucid interval had past ; the insidious disease with which she was struggling again enshrouded her intellect—she relapsed into unconsciousness ; and when, in the evening, she revived a little, and I attempted to recall the scene, no trace of it had been left on her mind.

The lethargy was evidently on the increase ; and all we could now do was to watch by her, persevering in the use of the various prescriptions, with the prospect, if not of cure, yet of the alleviation of the more distressing symptoms. How deeply afflicting, how exhausting to nature those unavailing efforts, they only know who have been circumstanced as we were,—disease, in so many instances, holding its onward course, and baffling

every human effort to stay its progress,—hope deferred day by day, and expiring at last, as each object of our tender solicitude was taken away ! Had the Word of God been unknown to us at such a time, or had unbelief been permitted to forbid our resting on its truths as the very revelation of Him who gave being to us and our children, what had become of us ! But, indeed, “ as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times,” that Word, in our day of darkness, was to us,—sparkling with *light and perfection*, like the high priest’s breastplate,—“ rejoicing the heart,—enlightening the eyes,”—appearing “ more to be desired than gold, yea much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb.” The way to the throne of grace was open too ; and though “ our flesh and heart did fail, God was the strength of our heart and our portion.”

Now, as during the illness of poor Alick, some token for good was shown us each successive day, and the Lord was proving himself a very present help in time of trouble. Even amidst the agitating circumstances of our trial, we were often affected to tears by the perception of this ; but when the storm had passed, and leisure was granted to look back upon all the way by which the Lord had led us, our hearts were penetrated with

the liveliest sense of his enduring faithfulness and tender mercy.

“ Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace ;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.
His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour ;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.”

On the morning after the yacht sailed, the nurse, who had been the faithful attendant of all the children from their birth, was sitting in the room alone with Ann. Dimly perceiving the girl, she called her to approach. “ Come near me, Nanny,” she said ; and when she did so, she moved her hand over her face, to assure herself of her presence. The more easily to gratify her in this, the nurse had knelt by the side of the bed. “ Nanny,” she said again, rather hurriedly, “ you’re kneeling ; don’t kneel to me.” —“ To whom should I kneel ? ” “ Kneel to God only ! ” she answered, in a very solemn tone, and then requested her to read to her. While she did so, and very soon after she had begun, the sleep returned, and notwithstanding every effort

to resist it, resumed its power, and she was again lost to consciousness.

During the night, intervals of this kind occasionally occurred, when, even amidst the heart-rending and helpless screamings so symptomatic of *water in the head*, her earnest prayers addressed to the Saviour for patience,—for all spiritual and eternal blessings,—could be heard.

We had made it a rule, when at any time she showed symptoms of returning consciousness, to repeat some text of Scripture close to her ear. In this way her mind was assisted in its feeble exertions, and her soul, we hoped, might be fed with the bread of life. Two days before her death, on an occasion of this kind, her mother, supposing that she perceived some faint traces of consciousness, approached, and repeated these words :

“ Yea, though I walk in death’s dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill ; ” —

No sooner were they uttered, than they seemed, with talismanic power, to dissolve her slumber. She immediately opened her eyes, and, with great feeling, added :

“ For Thou art with me, and Thy rod
And staff me comfort still.”

She then continued,—“ O, mamma, what would I do without Christ now ! what a poor miserable creature should I be without Him ! ”

“ Do you feel Him strengthening and supporting you, Ann ? ” her mother asked.

“ O, yes, I feel,” she said, hesitating, as if she could not select a suitable word to express her experience ; “ I feel as if He were pressing me,” using her hands so as to describe support or upholding.

I then reminded her that Christ could have a fellow-feeling for her in her sore affliction ; for he had been a little child of her own age, and had gone through all the agonies preceding a painful death. I reminded her also of his compassion as a merciful and faithful High Priest, so that in all the afflictions of his own children he is afflicted, suffering nothing to come on them but what is necessary, and what he will give them strength to bear. Her soul seemed nourished and comforted. “ O, yes ! ” she said, with great emphasis ; “ that is very true.” I then asked, if I should at that time pray with her ? “ O, yes ; I’ll be *very, very* glad ; and, dear papa, be always praying *for* me.” We then kneeled around her bed, and poured out earnest prayers on her behalf. She remained conscious, and closely atten-

tive for a little ; but the cloud returned, and, long before our short exercise had concluded, the deep sleep out of which she had awaked, reasserted its irresistible influence over her exhausted frame.

In this state she remained for nearly four and twenty hours, excepting that often, especially during the night, she uttered the most plaintive cries, and seemed in great bodily pain. We attempted to comfort ourselves, powerless as we were to relieve her, by thinking that the suffering was all ours who witnessed her condition, and that she herself was not sensible of the affliction under which she groaned. We had now given up every hope that she should again so far recover as to be able to speak to us ; and our prayer to the God of all grace on her behalf was, that he would speedily perfect His work in her soul, and receive it, thus purified in his furnace, to his own immediate presence, where there " shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away." He, however, had yet mercy in store for our wounded spirits, and was pleased to permit us to hold communion with our beloved child once more, ere she winged her way to the mansions of eternal rest.

Late in the evening of the day before she died, as her mother and the faithful governess, who had been with the children ever since they entered school, were keeping watch by her, she groaned heavily once or twice, and appeared sensible of pain, or some uneasiness. Her mother accordingly requested Miss C. to offer some drink and to speak to her. During all the time from the previous evening, she had made no reply to any question. To their great joy, when now asked if she would have a drink, she answered, "Yes." When she had swallowed a little, on being asked again if it was good,—“Yes, very good,” she said; “what is it made of?” Her mother saw that a new opportunity had been granted of addressing her mind, and began to repeat, “Suffer little children to come unto me,”—the dear child at once took up the words; “and forbid them not,” she continued, “for of such is the kingdom of God.” Three times she repeated the passage, and seemed afraid she should be prevented or interrupted in doing so.

I was sent for, being in an adjoining room. She had requested her mother to come near her, for her sight was evidently almost or entirely gone; and she had thrown her arm around her neck, clinging fondly to her, as she continued to

repeat the words. On hearing my voice, she unloosed her arm, and stretched out both to me. She took hold of me, and seemed to delight in being conscious that she held me, and that I was with her.

"You know, my dear Ann," I said, "who spoke those sweet words you have repeated, and how faithful they must be?" "Yes, I know, papa," she said; "and what would I be if Christ were not with me! I would be in hell. O what would I be if Christ were not with me!" Then, after a little pause, attempting to raise her sightless eyes, she added, "Darling Matilda, you are in heaven, and I shall soon be there too!"

These were the last intelligent words we heard from her. Fearing the rapid return of stupor, we knelt down that she might once more unite with us, on earth, in the worship of our God and Saviour. For a little moment she was permitted to do this; but the cloud came again, and never till the end did she emerge from it.

As her bodily strength was, comparatively, little wasted, and as, from the shortness of her illness, she was but slightly reduced, we dreaded that, in the closing scene, she would suffer greatly from convulsions. We had the case of her dear brother before our eyes, and torn as our

hearts were under the recollection of what we had witnessed in him, we trembled that now our trial should be greatly aggravated. In this agonising anticipation, we besought the Lord, if it might be, to be spared the affliction, and he heard us.

Her complaint made most rapid progress. The plaintive moans and screamings resounded throughout the house during the night. By the morning they had subsided. During the forenoon she lay breathing freely, her features lighted up, and their expression composed and perfectly peaceful. The rapid circulation in the large veins of the neck and throat, seen distinctly as her head lay stretched back upon the pillow, told how quickly life was ebbing away. Soon after mid-day occasional twitches of the face and contraction of the fingers indicated that convulsions had commenced. We sought to be prepared for the Lord's will ; and good is his will. They went no farther, and in an hour they ceased altogether. A short interval succeeded, in which no symptom of convulsion or distress of any kind appeared ; and, at three o'clock exactly, without a sigh or struggle, she ceased to breathe. Time to her was at an end ; her sanctified spirit had fled its frail tabernacle—a body of sin and death, to enter on the inheritance which Christ, whose

presence she so sensibly felt in the dark valley, has purchased, and which, in sovereign grace, he bestows on them to whom it is given to believe in his name !

Our beloved Ann died on Saturday the 26th May. On Wednesday the 30th, her mortal remains were laid in the silent grave. She was placed on Jessie's left hand, the coffins touching each other. And thus, in the space of six short weeks, with no previous anticipation of such a trial, were we called upon to part with *four* of our seven darlings, the delight of our eyes and of our heart, and to see them laid side by side in the same grave. There they rest—how precious to us the spot !—awaiting a glorious resurrection ; placed as, very probably, they would have arranged themselves if going out to walk—Alexander at Matilda's right hand, and little Jessie between her two elder sisters. They are not, for God has taken them.

“ Whate'er we fondly call our own
Belongs to heaven's great Lord ;
The blessings lent us for a day
Are soon to be restored.
’Tis God that lifts our comforts high
Or sinks them in the grave :
He gives ; and when he takes away
He takes but what he gave.”

“Perhaps we loved them too well—perhaps valued them too little ; in the meantime, one thing we know—it is well, for God did it.”

His purposes in such dispensations as that by which we have been bereaved are mysterious to us ; in them we are made to “ drink of the wine of astonishment.” But if He makes them occasions for the display of the power and riches of his grace, ought we not to be contented ? If He causes us to rejoice over brands “ plucked out of the burning ;” over “ babes and sucklings,” out of whose mouths He perfects praise ; and if amidst the sufferings of our offspring, sustaining grace adequate to the affliction be vouchsafed, ought not our mourning to be turned into joy ? But for the cloud the rainbow could not appear, and according to its darkness is the brightness of the token of God’s immutable covenant. Abraham, no doubt, received Isaac with great joy, and circumcised him according to the commandment. But God re-demanded Isaac ; yet mark the end of the Lord ! It was not to grieve and bereave the parent, but to try, and purify and increase his faith ; to give him back Isaac, and load him with farther blessings. Christian parents must be the children of Abraham—they must follow his faith—submit to its trials—and, at last, “ in the mount of the Lord it shall be

seen,"—in the great day, they shall receive back their Isaacs, and many blessings besides.

Christ has promised, "I will not leave you comfortless ; in the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer." Seasons of great trial are those in which He especially proves to his children his faithfulness, according to his word. The people of the world may then refuse to be comforted ; they may fail to comprehend, nay, they may misunderstand the source of consolation from which the believer is supplied, when every stream of human consolation is dried up ; but to him, God indeed "turns his countenance,"—"makes darkness light before him, and crooked things straight. These things He does, and He will not forsake him."

By the foregoing Narrative, we desire to set to our seal that God is true, and to encourage his Israel to hope in him ; for with him is mercy and plenteous redemption. To obtrude our sorrows on others, merely to relieve our own hearts, were neither justifiable in itself, nor likely to attain the purposed end ; but to declare to them that fear God what he hath done for us, either in our own persons, or those of our beloved offspring ; to add our testimony to the evidence of his grace already recorded, or, from day to day being given, may minister encouragement to

some of the "little flock," whose case of affliction, when their hour of darkness arrives, ours may approximate ; and it gives glory to Him to whom alone all honour and praise are due.

In the greatest depths, amidst the most trying agitations of sorrow, he who lives by faith, and who has abandoned every legal hope, may be made to adopt the language of the Psalmist, and say,—“ In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.” There is such an *experience*,—not a vain imagination, nor the offspring of a delusive enthusiasm. This consolation is the work of God, and its elements are rich and abundant. It is enjoyed when the believer is enabled, through grace, to justify Him in his severest dealings ;—sincerely to acknowledge, because he truly feels, that he receives less than his sins deserve, and not one stripe more than the safety of his soul requires ; when, in the chastisements inflicted, he is made to discern *mercy*, inasmuch as others, far more trying, might have been substituted in their room ; when a blessed assurance is borne in upon his mind, that not the sword of justice inflicts the wounds for which he mourns, but the rod of parental discipline ; when he perceives, in his corrections, the token of sonship, and his spirit revives under the conviction that, all being partakers of them,

were he exempted he should be a bastard and not a son ; when a holy assurance is wrought in him, that when judged he is chastened of the Lord, that he should not be condemned with the world ; when, under the vigorous actings of faith, every jot and tittle of the Scriptures is to his eye stamped with the living certainty of truth, as if written with light, as “ spirit and life ; ” threatenings vivid as the handwriting on the wall ; promises shining with as steady and enduring a flame as the lamp which never went out on the altar of the Lord ; and precepts become sweet, and to be desired, as the droppings of the honeycomb ; when the world and all that it contains, weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, or tried by the high standard which measures the things of eternity, is felt to be a “ lying vanity ; ” when the nearness of Christ to the soul, in all the ordinances by which we may approach him, and in which he visits us, is sensibly perceived, and though the veil which “ this mortal ” interposes, is not, as in Stephen’s case, removed to reveal him to sense, standing at God’s right hand, yet faith experiences his presence and compassion ;—then the “ peace which passeth all understanding,” and which, over and far beyond every wave of trouble, points to the happy land of promise, “ keeps the heart and mind through Christ

Jesus the Lord." "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." "Truly God is good to Israel."

The world is prone to judge by sense of the condition of the people of God under his dealings with them, in which case there is no wonder that they esteem them of all men the most miserable. These will not drink of the fountains from which a polluted and destructive relief is drawn by sinners who have never known any other, and who have heard in vain of the "river which makes glad the city of God." "The troubles which afflict the just," moreover, are many, while they who fear not God often, for a time, "have no changes." Yet it is infinitely better, even with reference to the world that now is, to suffer affliction with the one, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin with the other. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with their joy. Is not the case of David, in all his afflictions, with that of Daniel and his companions, recorded; and has not the experience of holy martyrs, in every age, corresponded with, and confirmed the truth attested by those, that God keeps his people as the

apple of his eye, and hides them under the shadow of his wings? True, He himself is their Saviour, and worldly comforts are not the portion with which He feeds them; but is that portion the less real that it is spiritual? nay, is it not this which renders it suitable, substantial, and enduring? "The things which are seen are temporal, those which are unseen eternal." In the day of great trouble, when the Lord smiles, there is a largeness of confession, a vigour of faith, a closeness of communion, a liberty of intercourse, an earnestness of intercession, a fervour of devotion, a sense of favour, and a deadness to the world, at other times either not granted, or but languidly enjoyed; and the body, ever affected by the state of the spirit, is often, in such circumstances, so strengthened and upheld, that "songs of deliverance" encompass the afflicted, even amidst the "sorrows of death."

None are entitled to wish for trials; in themselves they are not pleasant but grievous; yet they who live by faith, whilst they anticipate days of darkness, ought not to be dismayed. They must pass through the cloud, but Christ will be there. Of the cup which He drank they must partake, though not as He did, and with his baptism be baptized, but his strength will uphold and his grace preserve them. His faith-

fulness is their buckler, and no emergency can arise for which full provision has not been made in that covenant, of which He is head and surety. The last enemy is as feeble before him, whether encountered by an infant or a patriarch, as all the rest with whom through life his people are called to contend. Has sin ceased to reign in your mortal body—has the devil been successfully resisted—has the world, in any measure, been overcome? Then death, too, will be destroyed through him who “delivered you out of the paw of the lion and the bear;” and the song of triumph will be sung, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

But let none think that there is no suffering in the Christian's afflictions. If this were so, why should they be sent? Their lamentation and tears in the sight of God tell truly how painful thy feel them to be. Their language often is, “Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!” How often was this our complaint under the pressure of the accumulated affliction laid upon us! Never till then did we comprehend that extremity of grief which affects the bodily powers, so as to induce a torpidity of action, which finds its relief in sleep. The disciples endured it: for it is recorded that they “slept for sorrow,” in the dark hour of

their Master's agony. Again and again did He come to them, after He had charged them 'to watch,—as if He could have enjoyed some secret comfort, from a knowledge that they did so,—and found them thus overwhelmed. There is such an extremity, the exclusive product of genuine sorrow. It may come upon those who are dear to Christ ; they may be exposed to it, but they will be preserved in it. Though they sink He neither slumbers nor sleeps. The iron may enter their soul, but its wound is not deadly. Here is their privilege—though “ chastened sore, they are not given over to death,”—“ the blessings of goodness prevent them.”

Yet even in its worst character, theirs is not the “sorrow of the world ;” not that of those who “ cry not unto him with their heart, though they howl upon their beds.” The severity of the stripes with which they are scourged is not so much that which wounds their spirit and weighs them down, as the conviction that their sins have rendered such discipline necessary. O ! the anguish with which they are penetrated from this cause ; and O ! the preciousness of that blood, by which they are washed from their sins, and re-established in a sense of the favour and friendship of God ! How sweet, too, thereafter, a closer and more faithful walk with Christ ; a

greater deadness to the world and sin ; a deeper and more genuine humility ; single-hearted devotedness to God and his cause, in simple and exclusive dependence upon that grace which is sufficient, and by which we can do and endure all things !

It may be gratifying to some to know that the three children who for a time were separated from their home, have, in the mercy of God, been restored to their usual health. “ Behold we count them happy that endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord ; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.”

THE END.







